Hafa Adai!

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3 women, 1 man arrested in Dandan burglary. PAGE 2

MPLT decision to buy private property questioned. PAGE 3

DFS executive confident Marianas will get visa waivers

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSISTANT EDITOR

A ranking official of the DFS Pacific Division, U.S. Group is optimistic that the CNMI and Guam will eventually be granted visa waivers for Chinese and Russian tourists.

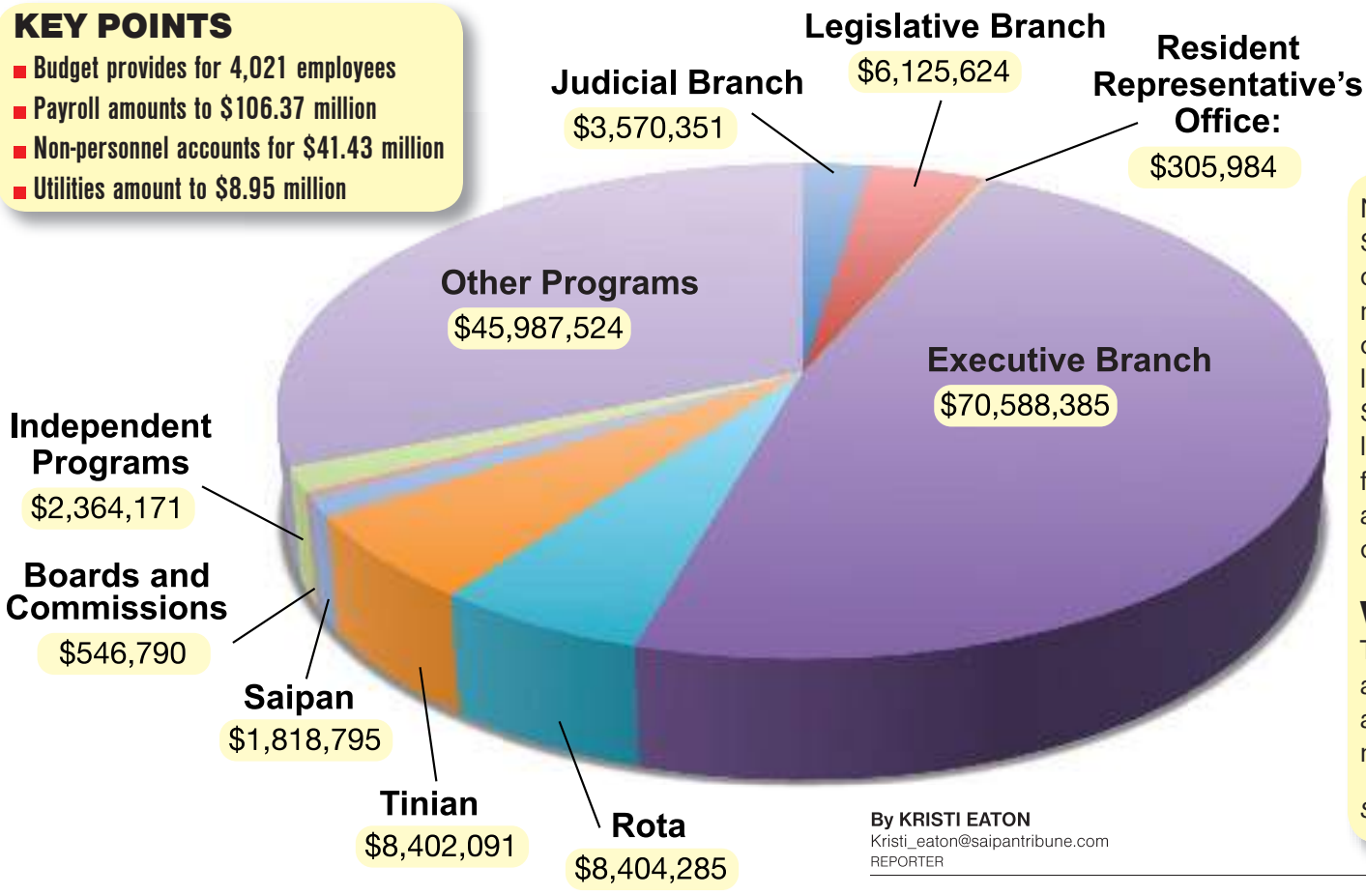
Managing director Jim Beighley, who is also chairman of the Guam Visitors Bureau's strategic planning committee, said in Saturday's Saipan Chamber of Commerce Installation Dinner that he believes the Marianas region will be successful in securing the visa waivers.

See DFS on Page 4

House OKs new $156.76M budget

KEY POINTS

- Budget provides for 4,021 employees
- Payroll amounts to $106.37 million
- Non-personnel accounts for $41.43 million
- Utilities amount to $8.95 million



Note: The total adds up to $148.1 million, the amount of local revenue. It does not include the Department of Public Land's $3.09 million or the "unencumbered" $3.5 million. The $5.2 million in Compact Impact funds, which will be divided among several of the agencies, is also not included.

WHAT'S AHEAD

The bill now goes to the Senate. It is expected to deliberate on the budget bill in the next couple of days.

Source: House Bill 16-213

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The House of Representatives passed a revised budget yesterday that allocates $156.76 million for government operations in fiscal year 2009—nearly $9 million less than the original Legislature-approved budget vetoed by the governor and 106 days already into the fiscal year.

The budget includes $148.1 million of projected government revenue, augmented with $5.17 million in Compact Impact funds and $3.5 million of "unencumbered" money taken from numerous accounts outside the general fund, for a total of $156.76 million.

A separate $3.1 million is proposed for the Department of Public Lands, whose revenue is constitutionally reserved for the agency's administrative costs and

See HOUSE on Page 4

Wife beater gets 10 years

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge Ramona V. Manglona yesterday slapped a 10-year prison term on a former Public School System employee who used a rifle, machete, and a knife to beat up his wife, seriously injuring her.

See WIFE on Page 4

Vicente Limes Laniyo emerges with a Corrections officer from the Superior Court after the hearing yesterday. Associate Judge Ramona Manglona imposed a 10-year jail term without parole on Laniyo over a beating that seriously injured his wife.
FERDIE DE LA TORRE

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Should there be more than just one legal cockfighting arena on Saipan?

Let your voice be heard! Go to www.saipantribune.com to cast your vote.

107 DAYS without a government budget for FY 2009

INSIDE

Hunt for Hamas
Israeli troops backed by tanks thrust deeper into Gaza and sought Hamas fighters in alleyways and cellars.

WORLD...Page 16

Top 10
It's official: Madonna tops the Los Angeles Times' Ultimate Top 10.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 18

MAKE THE COMMITMENT!

CERVICAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH
JANUARY 2009

ROTA HEALTH FAIR
Friday, January 16, 2009
ROTA PUBLIC HEALTH PARKING LOT
7:30 AM to NOON
(EXHIBITION BOOTHS AND GIVEAWAYS)

FREE PAP TEST SCREENING TO WOMEN WHO:
- Are 18 years of age and older
- Has resided in the CNMI for at least 1 year
- Meet BCSP income guidelines
- Has no medical insurance or has medical insurance that require a co-payment

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Pinatang Park to Leadership Park

HEALTH WALK
Tatachog to Pinatang park
Saturday, January 17 & 24 • 6:30 a.m.
FREE Blood Pressure Check, Blood Sugar Check and Weight Monitoring

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT PUBLIC HEALTH @ 532-9461

Rota Diabetic Association
Comprehensive Cancer Control Program
Rota Mayor's Office
CNMI Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

Local

ONSITE SEMINAR CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Maeda Pacific Corp. & Ericco LLC Engineers conduct an actual onsite seminar to teach local workers how to do rebar cutting, rebar works and form works for reinforced concrete box culverts. Some 2,100 linear foot of box culvert will be installed along the runway as part of the Saipan International Airport Runway 7/25 Rehabilitation Project. MPC and Ericco LLC are local supporters and willing to teach them to be more reliable on this kind of work.

3 women, 1 man arrested in Dandan home burglary

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Police arrested three women and a man for their alleged participation in a burglary at a house in Dandan on Monday.

Jocelyn M. Camacho, 33, and Carlene Muña, 25, were apprehended for allegedly helping commit the crime, while Leuevalyne Mafnas, 21, was arrested for burglary and theft. Joshua Santos, 20, was picked up for burglary and theft.

In yesterday morning's hearing, Superior Court associate judge Perry B. Inos imposed a $500 cash bail and $500 unsecured bond for the temporary release of Camacho and Muña.

Inos imposed a $600 cash bail and $5,400 unsecured bond each for the temporary release of Santos and Mafnas.

Santos was released after the hearing after posting bail.

During a bail modification hearing yesterday afternoon, Inos released the three women to third party custodians.

Arraignment was set for Feb. 2.

Detective Abraham C. Villagomez stated in his report that on Monday at 12:23pm, police officers responded to a house in Dandan after receiving a call about a burglary incident.

Preliminary investigation showed that Alina C. Cabrera had gone out to walk with her daughter and was returning home when she saw a man walking out of her garage carrying her luggage. Cabrera shouted at the man, prompting him to take off.

Cabrera chased the man and started yelling for help from neighbors to catch the suspect.

The suspect, who was shirtless and wearing a pair of blue denim shorts, tried to get into a passing vehicle but the driver refused to give him a ride. The suspect ran between a row of houses and plunged into the bushes.

The driver of the passing vehicle turned around and told Cabrera that the person she was chasing was Santos, a resident of Koblerville.

Cabrera went back to her house where she saw a woman inside a gold Toyota Camry car parked nearby. The victim asked the woman if she was with Santos. The woman denied this, saying she had parked because her car's engine was overheating.

Cabrera went inside her house where she discovered that one of the windows in the garage had a torn screen and some items were missing.

Cabrera walked around her house and spotted two women hiding behind banana trees next to her house. She also noticed that the woman inside the gold Toyota Camry had left the vehicle. Cabrera found some of the items stolen from her home inside the gold car. She then called police.

Detective Villagomez said the two women at the scene were identified later as Camacho and Muña.

At 1:30pm that same day, investigators spotted Santos and Mafnas walking on the road close to Hawaian Rock.

Investigators escorted Santos and Mafnas to Jin Store in Dandan where Cabrera met them. The victim identified Santos as the person who was outside her residence carrying the luggage and the female as the person outside the house sitting inside the car.

The detective said investigators later conducted a search at Mafnas' home in Koblerville, where a basket of clothes belonging to Cabrera were recovered.

MPLT decision to buy private property questioned

By KRISTI EATON
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REPORTER

The chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources is questioning the decision by the Marianas Public Land Trust's board of trustees to purchase land to build an office rather than rent office space.

In a letter to Vianny Hocog, chairman of the MPLT board of trustees, Rep. Ramon A. Tetuteb said he is concerned about the agency's decision to purchase land on Capital Hill to build an office rather that rent space after receiving additional documents.

An updated analysis comparing the merits of building an office versus renting space conducted by MPLT consultant Bruce MacMillan shows "extreme discrepancies from the first analysis," Tetuteb said. Those discrepancies include rental square footage space; rental cost per square feet and rental value; cost of construction of building per square feet; and the opportunity costs.

MPLT purchased the private property for $68 per square meter, $3 less than the appraised value, according to Tetuteb.

The representative also questioned MPLT's explanation that one of the reasons why they chose the Capital HIll property was because it had main road access, when in fact, the new documents show the land has a right-of-way issue.

"If main road frontage for public assess was the main criterion for choosing the selected site, it appears MPLT acquired property contrary to its own criterion, which raises red flags and questions regarding MPLT's policy decision to purchase such property," Tetuteb said, noting that there are reports of a personal relationship between a trustee of the board and the owner of the property—a conflict of interest.

The first analysis shows a gain of $315,551 for owning the property over renting, but the second analysis shows a gain of $41,992 for renting the property.

The representative inquired whether other options were considered during the year it took the board to decide to purchase property and build office space.

"Furthermore, the committee would like to know if MPLT explored the possibility of purchasing existing commercial buildings," Tetuteb said. "There are many commercial buildings fronting the main public roads on Saipan looking for new owners. Another option is to purchase foreclosed buildings from the Commonwealth Development Authority."

'Baka legally holding post as AG'

After conferring with the Attorney General's Office, press secretary Charles Reyes said Attorney General Greg Baka is legally holding the position.

Rep. Rosemond B. Santos wrote a letter this week to Gov. Benigno Fitial, stating Baka is violating the law because he has not been confirmed by the Legislature within 30 days of his appointment. Baka has held the position of Attorney General since Sept. 27, 2008, when Matthew Gregory stepped down.

"It has been more than 30 days since Mr. Baka's temporary appointment as Acting Attorney General and such appointment has not been forwarded to the Legislature. As a result, Mr. Baka's appointment is in violation of existing law," Santos wrote.

But Reyes said Baka's case doesn't apply because he was not appointed, he assumed the position automatically as he was previously Deputy Attorney General.

"The law clearly states someone appointed," he said. "The AGO is charged with following the law, and they are not violating the law."

Reyes said there are no plans to change Baka's position because it is functioning well. "[Baka] seems to be doing a good job at keeping things working smoothly," he said.

The AG's Office is currently understaffed and the priority is to hire more attorneys, the press secretary said. ***(Kristi Eaton)***

Habitual offender back in jail for using fake money

Habitual offender Lucas Taitano Manglona is back in jail after he allegedly purchased a pack of cigarettes and a lighter at a store in San Vicente, knowing that his $50 bill was counterfeit.

Manglona, 21, was arrested Tuesday for theft by deception. He was taken to the Superior Court yesterday morning for a bail hearing.

Superior Court Associate Judge Perry Inos imposed a $250 cash and $250 unsecured bond for the defendant's temporary liberty.

Detective George David stated in his report that on Monday afternoon the Department of Public Safety received a disturbance complaint at a compound in San Vicente.

David said responding police officers learned from witnesses that the call was a family dispute between Lucas Manglona and his brother, Nestor Manglona, over many issues.

Lucas Manglona claimed that his brother has been dealing in illegal drugs and has knowledge of stolen property.

Lucas Manglona also disclosed that a few days ago his brother showed him a bunch of rolled up cash that were all counterfeit. Lucas Manglona said he was given a fake $50 bill that he used to buy food.

The defendant said his brother gave him another fake $50 bill on Monday, which he used to buy a pack of cigarettes and a lighter at the Nang Ocha Store in San Vicente.

The detective said a police officer proceeded to Nang Ocha Store where he was able to confirm that there was indeed a fake $50 bill in the cash register.

Police arrested the defendant after a store employee identified Lucas Manglona as the one who used the fake money.

According to assistant attorney general Edward T. Buckingham, the defendant has a lengthy criminal history, including convictions for robbery, theft, attempted rape, aggravated assault and battery, and burglary. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Immigration arrests two more suspected overstaying aliens

CNMI Immigration agents have arrested two more suspected overstaying alien workers on Saipan.

GuoFu Shan and Zhao Yang, both male Chinese, were arrested on Tuesday and Monday respectively.

Shan and Yang were brought to the Superior Court yesterday afternoon for a bail hearing.

Associate Judge Perry B. Inos imposed a $1,000 cash bail for the temporary release of Shan, and $100 cash and $900 unsecured bond for Yang's.

Inos ordered the respondents to appear in court on Jan. 22 at 1:30pm to explain why they should not deported from the CNMI.

According to court documents, Immigration investigator Nicolas T. Reyes filed a deportation case against Shan in January 2002 for failing to comply with the conditions of his entry into the CNMI.

At that time, Reyes said Shan did not have any Labor complaint and never submitted any application for his renewal or extension.

Immigration arrested Shan in Garapan on Tuesday at 10:48pm.

Shan's last employer was the U.S. CNMI Development Corp., where he worked as a presser, according to Immigration records.

With respect to Yang, Immigration investigator John Peter stated in his report that on Monday afternoon, Immigration Maj. Vince Lizama detained the respondent after he failed to provide any valid Labor or Immigration document.

Peter said Yang admitted he has overstayed in the CNMI for over two months.

Immigration data showed that Yang used to work as an ironing worker at the United International Corp. His last work was as store supervisor for Peace Asia Pacific Corp. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Chamorro dictionary Working groups meet today

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

Members of the working groups tasked to revise the Chamorro-English dictionary will meet today at Room D1 Building N of Northern Marianas College starting at 9am.

The NMI Council for the Humanities' Chamorro-English Dictionary Revision Project is now on its fourth month of implementation.

Six working groups from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are currently reviewing to expand the first set of 90 pages of the Chamorro-English Dictionary by Topping, Ogo, and Dunga, which was first published in 1975.

The goals are to revise and update as much of these entries as possible by the third year of the project in 2011.

The six working groups of three members each are headed by Carmen S. Taimanao, Bernie P. Sablan, Jose Sanchez, Vicente Borja, Tina Hocog, and Angie C. Fitial.

A critical component of the project will be the inclusion of new entries with emphasis on cultural words that are not in the original dictionary, to be undertaken by cultural experts.

Experts in areas such as traditional fishing, customs and rituals, traditional medicine, etc., have been identified to serve as possible consultants.

Upon completion of all the new entries and revisions during Year Three, another group of Chamorro language experts, particularly the elders, will be consulted on specific words and meanings, as needed.

The project is a major part of the grant awarded to the Humanities Council by the National Science Foundation for a three-year collaborative project to study and help preserve the Chamorro language.

The total funds are $300,000, of which approximately $285,000 will go to the Council to support work in the CNMI.

The remainder will go to the University of California at Santa Cruz.

The grammar, revised dictionary, and oral histories—in video and print formats—will provide a highly detailed, accessible record of the Chamorro language for future generations.

DFS

From Page 1

"Most people thought there is absolutely now way the Department of Homeland Security, under a Bush administration, could be convinced to allow Chinese and Russian travelers to come to the CNMI and also Guam under a federalized immigration administered by DHS, especially with an impending regional military buildup. I must admit that I definitely had my doubts but I believe we will be successful in this. I remain very optimistic about the regulations that will be published by the visiting officials," he said in his keynote speech.

Federal visitors

Two groups of officials from DHS will be on island today to meet with members of the community to discuss the impending federal takeover of local immigration.

The first group is made up of representatives from the policy division, and is headed by Alex Hartman, who, as policy advisor at the DHS' Office of Policy, is responsible for coordinating all policy initiatives between DHS and agencies to implement the new immigration law and the Guam-CNMI visa waiver program.

The officials in the second visiting group, including David Gulick of U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Walter Haith, Guam field office director for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; and Marie Sebrechts, the regional media director for DHS from California, will meet with community members in order to build working relationships.

Both groups will meet with representatives from the business community at the Saipan Chamber of Commerce. Those in attendance will include officials from the Marianas Visitors Authority, Marianas Immigration Task Force, Chamber officers, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Strategic Economic Development Council.

'No China yet'

Meantime, a Pacific News Center report quotes Guam Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo as saying that the new regional visa waiver program for the CNMI and Guam will include Hong Kong but does not include China—as yet.

"The new regional visa waiver program is off to a good start," she said, according to the PNC report. "We have been working on adding Hong Kong to the visa waiver program for some time, and its inclusion will be good news for our visitor industry. The Department of Homeland Security is making the necessary plans toward the timely implementation of the new program.

"We also have an opportunity to continue to work toward the addition of China under the new visa waiver program. While the rule is not expected to add China to the program at this time, I am informed that the rule will provide an opportunity for future inclusion of China if certain security measures are met. This is a good opportunity to enhance security by using new biometric technology, and the inclusion of Hong Kong is a good basis for expanding to new markets in China," she said.

MARK RABAGO

DFS Pacific Division, U.S. Group managing director Jim Beighley was the keynote speaker in Saturday's Saipan Chamber of Commerce Installation Dinner.

Bordallo was briefed by DHS officials yesterday, according to the PNC report.

Unified voice

Beighley, meanwhile, said that if the Marianas ultimately get visa waivers for China and Russia it will be because everyone pitched in and approached DHS as one.

"If we're successful, it will be for one simple reason that we approached DHS with a unified voice—the Governor's Office, the Legislature, members of Congress involved in this, and the business community—all approached DHS with a unified voice. I believe we will find a solution with DHS and we will only be successful because we did this. We did our homework, we understood everyone's concern, we offered solutions to address these concerns, and we did it together. We did it together with a unified voice," he said.

He, however, said the effort to include China and Russian to the new regional visa waiver program for the CNMI and Guam will only be the first of many challenges the Commonwealth will face this year due to federalization.

"The visa waiver will only be the first of a number of issues that are going to be addressed. Guest workers, labor provisions, related immigration provisions, foreign investors provisions are all incredibly important. All these issues will be taking on more urgency in 2009 as the deadlines and timetables under Public Law 110-229 continue to move forward," he said.

Added security

The PNC report says that the new rules are expected to increase security around the current Guam-only visa waiver program. It further said countries participating in the Guam-only program with high visa refusal rates may be omitted from the new program. This would include Indonesia, Vanuatu, and Western Samoa, "all known to be of minimal economic benefit to the current travel and tourism base for both Guam and the CNMI. Additionally, it is expected that the Solomon Islands will be removed from participating in the new program due to its current political instability."

PNC noted that all countries otherwise currently eligible under the Guam-only program are expected to become program participants under the new regional visa waiver program. The Guam market will benefit from the addition of Hong Kong under the new program. Under the proposed new program, travelers holding valid Hong Kong passports will be admitted to Guam without a visa.

WIFE

From Page 1

The sentence against 42-year-old Vicente Limes Laniyo is without parole.

Manglona ordered Laniyo to pay a $1,000 fine and submit to counseling at the Community Guidance Center.

"What you did to your wife is not acceptable!" the judge told the defendant, who bowed his head as he and counsel, assistant public defender Richard Miller, listened to the sentence.

Manglona said that violence against domestic partners has to be stopped.

Manglona said the case is very troubling because the wife's injuries were so serious and numerous. "[It's] only a miracle [that] she is still alive," the judge said.

Manglona said Laniyo, who weighs 260 pounds according to a pre-sentence report, is almost three times the size of his wife.

Laniyo was last assigned at the PSS food and nutrition service program.

Manglona said the means used by the defendant were not his hands but three weapons—a rifle, a large machete, and a small knife.

The judge said that, according to the victim, Laniyo was not under the influence of alcohol or drugs when the beating happened.

Manglona said Laniyo repeatedly struck the victim just to get her to confess that she's is fooling around.

Manglona said photos of the victim showed how serious the extent of the beating was.

The judge said the case is very similar to the 2003 case against Larry Banal Aguilar, who hacked his domestic partner to death using a machete. In that case, Manglona meted out a 50-year prison term without parole on Aguilar, who pleaded guilty to first-degree murder.

"The victim in Aguilar's case died. In this case, she is still here," she said.

Manglona said Laniyo's case is a grave concern because it happened after the Aguilar case and many other domestic violence convictions in the Commonwealth.

"The way to change has to be consistent with your conduct and not by words," the judge said.

She hopes that the six children of Laniyo and the victim will stand by their mother by supporting her financially, physically, and emotionally.

In 2007, the Attorney General's Office charged Laniyo with three counts of assault with a dangerous weapon, one count of assault and battery, and one count of kidnapping.

Laniyo entered a plea agreement with the government. He pleaded guilty to aggravated assault and battery. The remaining charges were dismissed.

The factual basis of the agreement stated that on Aug. 26, 2007, Laniyo caused serious bodily harm on his wife, including severe lacerations on her back, head, hand, and thighs, while in possession of an air rifle.

According to the victim's statement to the police, she and her husband were talking shortly before midnight in their house in Garapan when he accused her of fooling around.

Laniyo then started hitting her with a machete, a rifle, and a pocket knife.

HOUSE

From Page 1

for investment by the Marianas Public Land Trust, and cannot be used for central government operations.

The revised budget passed 18-1. Rep. Oscar Babauta voted against the bill, while Rep. Edwin Aldan was absent.

This is the House's second attempt at the budget. Last month both the House and Senate passed a $165.4 million budget, but Gov. Benigno Fitial notified them that he was vetoing it because of an $8 million drop in projected revenue. He then slashed government budgets across the board by 5.5 percent for the rest of the fiscal year.

Rep. Ray Yumul, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said he used the governor's 5.5 percent budget cut as a model for the revised budget.

"Basically we followed what the governor did when he took the $156 million [in local government revenue] and taking that 5.5 percent and reducing it to $148 million," he said. "We've complied with that. We complied with his notification, so everything we did is based on his notification to us through his transmittals with the Secretary of Finance. So this legislation should be exactly what he's looking for."

Earlier this week the House failed to achieve a two-thirds majority to override the governor's veto of the original budget.

During yesterday's session, the House members debated for hours on several provisions dealing with the hiring of faculty for Northern Marianas College; retirement for immigration employees affected by federalization; certification of vacant positions; and the pooling of government contributions.

Rep. Tina Sablan said she was disappointed by some of the provisions, especially with the provision allowing the pooling of Retirement Fund contributions.

"But as a whole, what matters is the bigger picture, and the bigger picture is we passed the budget," she added.

Yumul agreed with Sablan that it's not a perfect bill, but added that it's difficult to develop revenue-generating bills when there is no budget in place. Once the budget becomes law, Yumul said he would assemble the Ways and Means committee and other members of the House to start looking at ways to develop a broader tax base, in order to find new ways of generating revenue.

The Senate is expected to reconvene and take up the budget in the next few days. If the Senate passes the bill it will go before the governor. Once with the governor, he has 20 days to sign the bill, line item veto it or veto it altogether.

Marpi homestead applicants surpass number of lots

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
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REPORTER

The number of applications for residential homesteads in Marpi has already surpassed the total number of available lots, according to Public Lands Secretary John S. DelRosario Jr.

DelRosario said the available lots in the area is 1,200 but the applications have already reached 3,400.

"This would be difficult for us. But we're doing everything we can to solve this problem," DelRosario said.

He said most of the applicants are self-employed.

He said there are certain regulations to follow but DPL is taking into consideration the economic situation in order for the lots to be affordable.

"We have to be realistic [about] current circumstances," he said. DPL has already extended from three years to six years the period for recipients to build their homes.

DelRosario said that another challenge is what to do with applicants who do not qualify for homesteads.

"What do we do with that? We may offer them another scheme, which is rent-to-own," he said.

Another problem for DPL is wealth acquisition. "When the applicant has already acquired the lot, they sell it. The trend is that, as long as it is private, they will sell it. That's why we have to build the house first," he said.

Each homestead lot will have an area of 750 to 1,000 square meters. It will have space for a septic tank, especially on Tinian, where there is no sewer system.

Two other areas on Saipan are available for the program: 215 lots in Koblerville and 78 on Capital Hill. The clearing operations will be done this year.

DPL recently announced that the governor will issue over 400 homestead lots on Tinian in mid-February and 500 on Rota in May.

DelRosario said the lots on Tinian are located in West San Jose, near the MRDC and harbor. That area, he said, is on a gradual slope. A map of the homestead's exact location was not immediately available.

He said these homesteads were scheduled for distribution last year but did not push through due to the absence of survey works. He said survey works would be completed within a month after the awarding of contract to a survey firm.

The homestead design for Tinian has already been approved by the Division of Environmental Quality, he said.

The lots and boundaries will be shown to the recipients in mid-February.

"It is a new policy decision that realistically accommodates the economic plight of prospective homesteaders," he said.

Applicants may visit the Tinian DPL Office for updates.

Tourism numbers up on Rota, down on Saipan, Tinian

While tourist numbers were down on Saipan and Tinian, Rota enjoyed an upswing in its tourism activity in December 2008, according to the latest figures from the Marianas Visitors Authority.

Buoyed by charter flights from Japan, Rota experienced a 16-percent increase in visitor arrivals last month from 866 in December 2007 to 1,004 in December 2008.

Japanese arrivals constituted the second largest percentage rise of 108 percent from 217 during the same period a year ago to 452 last month.

Mainland U.S. tourists had the largest percentage increase of 111 percent (nine to 19), while visitors from the Philippines remained level at one year-to-year. The rest showed decreases—Korea 50 percent (from two to one), Russia 100 percent (from two to zero), Guam 2 percent (184 to 181), and others 9 percent (seven to four).

For calendar year 2008, arrivals to Rota experienced a 7 percent rise to 2,895 from 2,714 a year ago.

Saipan, meanwhile, saw visitor arrivals drop from 34,578 in December 2007 to 32,669 in December 2008—a 6 percent decrease.

Leading the fall in tourism numbers are travelers form China and Hong Kong, which dropped 42 percent from 3,470 to 2,004 in December 2008.

Korea also suffered a 30-percent loss in tourists from 11,615 in December 2007 to 8,096 in December 2008. The markets of Guam (7 percent), U.S. (3 percent), and the Philippines (26 percent) also experienced losses last month.

On the positive side, Saipan arrivals from Russia grew 39 percent (644 to 895), while those from Taiwan increased 46 percent (24 to 35).

Saipan's December 2008 performance does not mirror the island's fate in calendar year 2008 as arrivals remained almost the same—93,666 from 93,277.

Of the three main islands of the Commonwealth, Tinian had it worst in December 2008 as arrivals fell 40 percent from 4,839 to 2,896 last month.

Across the board, arrivals from the different markets decreased led by arrivals from Guam (81 percent), the U.S. (78 percent), Saipan (54 percent), China and Hong Kong (47 percent), others (29 percent), Korea (17 percent), and Japan (12 percent).

For the year, arrivals to Tinian were down 33 percent from 12,965 in 2007 to 8,648 in 2008.
(Mark Rabago)

Announcement for the Opening of the
Psychology Practice of Dr. Ron Meister
(Licensed Psychologist 670 322-0349)

At the NMPASI conference room
Located just north of the Gualo Rai intersection
On Friday January 16th from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.

Thai refreshments will be served.
All are welcome!! No RSVP required

NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
Artist Toki Mojica demonstrates to Marianas High School students the art of weaving to orient the students about entrepreneurship during Career Day yesterday.

MHS students exposed to over 40 possible careers

By NAZARIO RODRIGUEZ JR.
n_rodriguez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Over 40 presenters from different professions participated in the annual Career Day at Marianas High School yesterday.

The presenters came from various sections of the community, including private and government agencies. These included artists, athletes, businessmen, entrepreneurs, company managers, lawyers, judges, doctors, customs officers, dentists, immigration officers, hoteliers, Army officers, lawmakers, teachers, and environmentalists.

Prominent government officials included Rep. Tina Sablan and Commerce Secretary Michael Ada. Superior Court judges David Wiseman and Kenneth Govendo also showed up for the three-hour presentations at all 41 classrooms.

The Counseling Department of MHS led by Hazel Tudela coordinated this year's activity.

Counselor Cherlyn Cabrera said each of the 1,248 students had the chance to learn about the different careers they may later pursue in life.

Artist and entrepreneur Toki Mojica emphasized the importance of preserving the local culture by means of handicrafts.

"You must learn to know your abilities, put them to good use, always do the right thing by learning what you are and who you are and continue to learn the values you have learned from your ancestors," Mojica said.

She stressed the importance of education in order to gain more knowledge of the things around the islands.

"I'm here to share and hope to touch your heart today. Like me, you should learn to manage your time in order to manage your life the right way," she told the students.

She emphasized that, in order to be successful, things must be done from the heart, and not by way of shortcuts.

"Never take advantage of other people. This is the way to live a very successful life," she said.

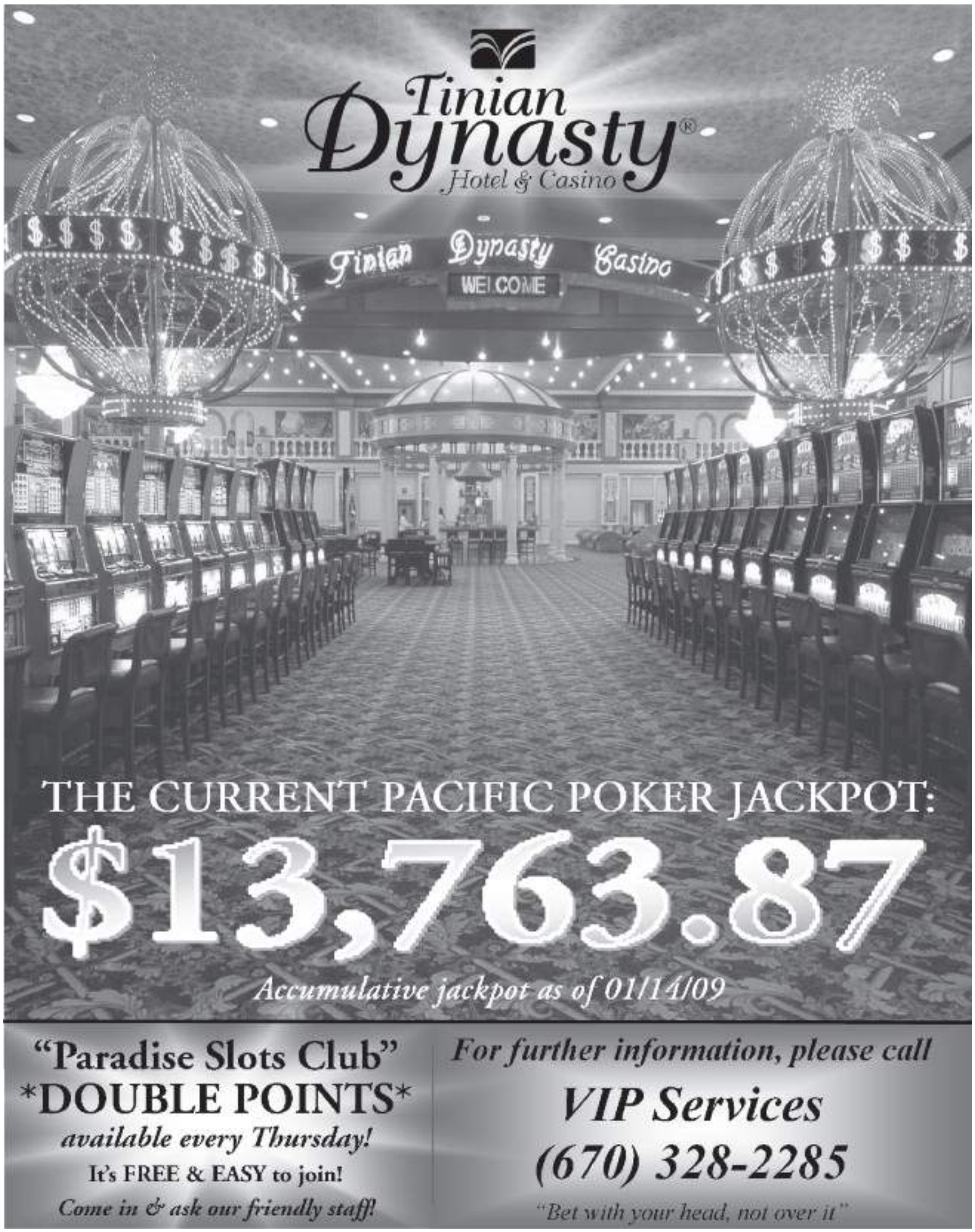
"You must find the things you like to do. Be passionate because passion will never be wrong. You must learn how to balance your life and learn how to be flexible," she said.

BECOME A NURSE IN 11 MONTHS!
Emmanuel College
Emmanuel College announces its registration of its
Third Cohort of Licensed Vocational / Practical Nursing Program.
Classes will start on January 20, 2009.
For information on the Licensed Vocational Nursing
Program at Emmanuel College, please call
235-5432 / 5139 or you may visit Emmanuel Campus
at Pacific Towers in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.
DISCOVER A WORLD OF NURSING
POSSIBILITIES AT
EMMANUEL COLLEGE
"My dream was to help people by becoming a nurse. Emmanuel College helped me realize my dream and potential in just11 months..."
- Angeline Marie J. Ayuyu, GN
First Cohort
www.emmanuelcollegecnmi.com

COUNCIL BYLAWS

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Carmen Fernandez, second from right, and leaders from different groups on campus sign the newly-adopted bylaws for the College Council, the primary governance council at NMC that ensures all constituencies are represented in decision-making processes. From left, Frank Sobolewski, Faculty Senate president; Ivan Mereb, Associated Students of NMC president; Fernandez; Joyce Taro, staff Senate president.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Deadline set for filing quarterly tax returns

The Division of Revenue and Taxation is reminding all CNMI residents that the 2008 4th Quarter deadline for filing the quarterly tax returns is Monday, Feb. 2, 2009. The Division of Revenue and Taxation will be open from 7:30am to 6:30pm on Monday Feb. 2, 2009. The office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation is located at the Joeten DanDan Commercial Center. For more information call 664-1000, 664-1034 Compliance Branch, or 664-1065 Collection Branch. ***(PR)***

Bayani to host cultural show fundraiser

The Bayani Association will host and launch a Filipino Cultural Show called "Balik-Tanaw Sa Kulturang Pinoy" on Jan. 17, at 7pm, at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan in Garapan.

The two-hour cultural show and banquet dinner presents about 16 creative cultural dances that portray the Filipinos' regional culture, tradition and arts representing the Philippine islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

The CNMI Guma' Ezperansa/Karidat is the chosen beneficiary for the net proceeds of the event. ***(PR)***

Vendors needed for Puengin Inetnon

The Kagman Community Association is looking for interested vendors to sell food, drinks, arts, crafts, clothing, produce, snacks, or other items at Puengin Inetnon. Puengin Inetnon is Chamorro for "A Night of Gathering". Puengin Inetnon will be Kagman's Friday Night Market and will be held every government payday Friday outside the Kagman Community Center. More vendors are needed. Call the Kagman Post Office at 256-POST for more info. ***(PR)***

Attention to families with disabilities on Tinian, Rota

The Family Hope Center under the CNMI Council for Developmental Disabilities and Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. would like to inform the community that the System Navigators would be traveling to Tinian and Rota to conduct interviews and follow up(s) with families with disabilities on the following dates:

Tinian Jan. 15-16, 2009
Rota Jan. 22-23, 2009

We are encouraging families with disabilities on Tinian and Rota to contact our offices at NMPASI, 234-7273/4 for Frances Torres or Dorian Camacho or CNMI DD Council for Lillian Ada at 664-7005/7000 or cell phone no. 287-5643 for an appointment. ***(PR)***

Kagman community meeting today

The Kagman Komunidat Association is inviting the public to meet at the Kagman Community Center today, Jan. 15, 2009, at 6:30pm. Issues to be discussed include the Kagman sidewalk construction, Puengin Inetnon (Kagman Friday Night Market), future and current CIP projects for Kagman (CIP coordinator Vicky Villagomez will be present), and other current community issues. Reps. Rosemond Santos and Ed Salas will also be present to discuss issues. ***(PR)***

College tuition funds for high school students

Current high school students who want to get a head start on their college education can now enroll at the Northern Marianas College and even have their tuition wholly funded.

The funding is made available through the College Access Challenge Project, which aims to increase college enrollment and retention among the CNMI's public high school graduates. The project will be awarding direct financial aid in the form of need-based grants and tuition and fees assistance to qualified participants.

To determine if they are qualified for the program, high school students are advised to contact Lulu Wang or Zenaida Javier at the NMC Counseling Office (234-5498 Ext. 1341).

In addition to providing financial assistance, the College Access Challenge project will also help provide academic support services, which will include tutoring, personal counseling, and a variety of educational activities and workshops to prepare students for success in college.

Registration for the Northern Marianas College's Spring 2009 Semester is ongoing until Jan. 17, 2009. Application for admissions will be accepted until the last day of registration.

For more information about admissions, call the Office of Admissions and Records at 234-5498 ext 1537 or log on to www.nmcnet.edu. ***(NMC)***

NMC

High school students and other prospective college students at the recent financial aid workshop hosted by the Northern Marianas College. The college is making financial aid available to qualified high school students who want to enroll in college classes. More information may be obtained from Leo Pangelinan at 234-5498 ext. 1322.

Bank joins college scholarship program

HAGATNA, Guam—For the sixth consecutive year, the Bank of Guam is offering local high school seniors an opportunity to apply for up to $5,000 in grants through its participation with the 2009 Education Exchange College Grant Program.

Totaling $50,000 in grants nationally for 2009, the Education Exchange Program is open to all college-bound, high school seniors graduating this year. Applicants must be U.S. citizens and able to provide written acceptance to an accredited four-year college by May 15, 2009. Other information includes an official copy of the high school transcript and two letters of recommendation.

Applications are available at all Bank of Guam branches, and have been distributed to Guam's high schools.

Students must mail their completed applications and supporting documents directly to the ACCEL/Exchange Network in New Jersey. The application package must be postmarked not later than March 16, 2009.

A total of four $5,000 grants and 30 $1,000 grants will be awarded by July 2009.

Under the ACCEL/Exchange Education Exchange Program, a total of 7 Guam students have been selected in the national process for a total of $11,000. In 2008, 2 Academy of Our Lady of Guam students each were awarded $1,000, while in 2006, three Guam students were awarded a record $7,000. Guam's winners in 2004 and 2005 each won $1,000. ***(BoG)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUT-OUT

"Happy belated birthday, Cat! Wishing you all the best. Also, welcome back, Marlon! Our group is now complete! We love you Mr. & Mrs. Cabrera!" Greetings come from your friends Frank, Carol, Sexy Cindy, Mike, Rita, Jake, Bev, Fatima, and Rhon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy 14th birthday to Zachary Camacho Aldan, left, and happy 8th birthday to Zavannah Camacho Aldan, far right. Greetings come from Aunty Joce.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUNSHINE BOY

Happy fifth birthday to Andreas Arzoumanian, who is celebrating his birthday today, Jan. 15, 2009! Best wishes and lots of love from his parents, his brothers, Lucas and Christopher, and all his extended family worldwide.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR DRINKING WATER

December 2008 Tests Showed Coliform Bacteria in Saipan Water

Our water system recently violated a drinking water standard. Although this incident was not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened and what we did to correct this situation.

We routinely monitor for drinking water contaminants. Throughout **December 2008**, we collected **88** water samples in Saipan to test for the presence of coliform bacteria with **5** samples or **5.68%** showing the presence of total coliform bacteria. The standard is that no more than five percent (5%) of samples may do so.

What should I do?

- **You do not need to boil your water or take other corrective actions.** However, if you have specific health concerns, consult your doctor.
- People with severely compromised immune systems, infants, and some elderly may be at increased risk. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. General guidelines on ways to lessen the risk of infection by microbes are available from EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1 (800) 426-4791.

What does this mean?

This is not an emergency. If it had been, you would have been notified immediately. Coliform bacteria are generally not harmful themselves. *Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other; potentially-harmful, bacteria may be present. Coliforms were found in more samples than allowed and this was a warning of potential problems.*

Usually, coliforms are a sign that there could be a problem with the system's treatment or distribution system (pipelines). Whenever we detect coliform bacteria in any sample, we do follow-up testing to see if other bacteria of greater concern, such as fecal coliform or *E. coli*, are present. We did find these bacteria in our subsequent testing, and further testing shows that this problem has been resolved.

What happened? What was done? Look below for the specific village or streets where problems occurred in **December 2008:**

- **Dandan:** (sample ID# 14A, Fiesta St., Tasi Dr., Tasi Ln., Gatbo Ave.) Tests indicated that there were adequate chlorine levels in the water system; however, the treatment operator discovered the chlorine ejector for this water supply malfunctioned. Treatment operator replaced the damaged ejector, flushed the lines and increased chlorine treatment for the disinfection. This may be the cause for the bacterial contamination. Repeat samples tests indicated the water to be free of both total coliform and E. coli.
- **Lower Dandan:** (sample ID# 17B, Holiday Dr., Independence Lp., Natibu Pl.) Tests indicated that there were inadequate chlorine levels in the water system; however, the treatment operators discovered Isley booster 2 chlorine supply hose cracked, which cause the dosage to drop to "0" lbs. per day, this may be the cause for the bacterial contamination. The treatment operators replaced the cracked hose and reactivated the Isley booster 2, flushed the lines and increased chlorine treatment for the disinfection. Repeat samples tests indicated the water to be free of both total coliform and E. coli.
- **Kagman:** (sample ID# 10B, Talisai Ave.) Tests indicated that there were adequate chlorine levels in the water system; however, the water operators are still investigating the cause for the bacterial contamination in this area. The treatment operators flushed the lines and increased chlorine treatment for the disinfection. Repeat samples tests indicated the water to be free of both total coliform and E. coli.
- **As Lito:** (sample ID# 24B, Msgr. Martinez Rd., As Perdido) Test indicated that there were adequate chlorine levels in the water system; however, the water operators discovered a leak in the distribution system pipes on Simiya Ln., along Msgr. Martinez Rd., this may be the cause for the bacterial contamination. The water operators repaired the leak and chlorinators flushed the lines and increased chlorine treatment for the disinfection. Repeat samples tests indicated the water to be free of both total coliform and E. coli.

For more information, please contact CUC Water Quality Laboratory Manager, Heidi Yelin at 322-5140 or via email at: cuclabman@yahoo.com or contact CUC Water Division Manager, Mariano Iglecias at 235-7025 or via email at: miglecias@cucgov.net

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

This notice is being sent to you by the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, Water Division
State Water System ID #: MP 0000001 Date Distributed: January 15, 2009

Fiji flood kills 9, thousands displaced

By PITA LIGAIULA
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

SUVA, Fiji (AP)—Rain-soaked Fiji faces at least three more days of storms after its worst flooding in a generation killed nine people, forced thousands to flee swamped homes and stranded foreign tourists, officials said Wednesday.

Tourists in dozens of resorts on the western edge of the South Pacific nation were warned to stay inside, and at least one major airline scheduled an extra flight to get people out.

A woman who jumped into a swollen river to escape a landslide was the ninth victim of the rain and floods, police inspector Erami Raibe said.

"Stay where you are, and take extra care. That's what we're telling everyone," said Patiliai Dobui, the head of Fiji's Disaster Management Office.

Meteorological Service director Rajendra Prasad said gale force winds will batter the main islands and coastal seas later Wednesday, with fresh active rain bands expected across the main island of Viti Levu, then spreading across the entire country.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime rainfall situation," Prasad told The Associated Press.

In the town of Monasavu on Viti Levu, more than 41 inches (1,044 millimeters) of rain had fallen in the past five days, he said.

In the international tourism center of Nadi, 38 inches (950 millimeters) have been recorded, flooding shops. Many likely will be forced out of business, local officials said.

A state of emergency continued in force in western Viti Levu, where the tourism industry is based. Australia's national carrier Qantas on Wednesday scheduled a special flight to airlift stranded tourists from Nadi to Sydney, and said it would continue to monitor the situation should further flights be needed.

Disaster Management Office spokesman Isireli Narawa said nearly 9,000 residents were now in shelters, with thousands of homes submerged by brown floodwaters, bridges washed out and many roads cut off by water and mud.

Electricity, telephone and water services "are all badly affected," he said.

The banks of two rivers near the town of Labasa were breached Tuesday night, submerging houses in low-lying parts of the town and forcing hundreds to flee to emergency shelters, police spokesman Atunaisa Sokomuri said.

Emergency distress signals go digital

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) have helped to save countless lives at sea. EPIRBs are portable radio beacons designed to alert the Coast Guard of a vessel's position in the event of an emergency.

Beginning Feb. 1, the U.S. Coast Guard and other search and rescue agencies will only receive distress alerts broadcasting the digital 406 MHz signal.

The digital 406 MHz EPIRB's signal is 50 times more powerful than the analog 121.5/243 MHz beacon boaters have been using for many years.

"This transition will reduce the number of false distress alerts and allow search and rescue resources to give real alerts the attention they deserve," said Lt. Danielle Renoud, a search and rescue coordinator stationed at the Coast Guard District Fourteen Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Honolulu. "The 406 MHz beacon is superior to the 121.5/243 MHz beacon because the location information is much more accurate and the signal carries registration information with it."

406 MHz EPIRBs broadcast a unique code that identifies each vessel. Proper registration of an EPIRB will make it much more effective during an emergency. When a 406 MHz beacon signal is received, search and rescue personnel can retrieve information from a registration database. This includes the beacon owner's contact information, emergency contact information, and the vessel's identifying characteristics.

EPIRBs fall into two categories: Category I units are designed to float free from a sinking boat and will automatically activate themselves; Category II units must be manually activated by someone on the vessel. There are new units on the market that now include built-in Global Positioning System receivers. The GPS-EPIRBs broadcast more accurate position information about the vessel.

Beginning Feb. 1, 2009, the Coast Guard and other search and rescue personnel will only receive distress alerts broadcast using digital 406 MHz Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons. Search and rescue satellites will no longer process older model analog EPIRBs that only transmit on 121.5 or 243 MHz.
COAST GUARD PHOTO/PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS CONNIE TERRELL

"Our hope is that all mariners and pilots will carry a 406 MHz beacon and keep all contact information updated on the beacon registration Web site," said Renoud. "Doing these two things will ensure the best possible chance of rescue during an emergency."

The regulation applies to all Class A, B, and S 121.5/243 MHz EPIRBs. It does not affect 121.5/243 MHz man overboard devices that are designed to work directly with a base alerting unit only and not with the satellite system.

ON THE NET

- For more information about EPIRBs, visit: http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/gmdss/epirb.htm
- To register an EPIRB, visit: www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov/ or call 1-888-212-SAVE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration maintains a database for EPRIB registrations. In the event a beacon is triggered, the contact information is used to call the owner's home or business. This information is critical for search and rescue coordinators to find those in distress as quickly as possible. Properly registered EPIRBs can significantly take the search out of search and rescue.

To register an EPIRB, visit: www.beaconregistration.noaa.gov/ or call 1-888-212-SAVE. Registrations must be updated at least every two years or when information, such as emergency contact phone numbers, changes.

The Coast Guard urges all who work and play on the water to keep proper safety equipment onboard their vessels at all times. Coast Guard-approved life jackets, flares, fire extinguishers, and a VHF-FM radio are just a few examples of life-saving equipment every boater should own. ***(Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael De Nyse, USCG)***

Badly mauled by dogs, Kiribati boy, 9, offered free plastic surgery in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (Central News Agency/PIR)—A 9-year-old boy from Kiribati in the south-central Pacific Ocean has arrived in Taipei to have plastic surgery at Mackay Memorial Hospital, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Monday.

According to the statement, the child, Kautabea Teuea, was mauled by nine wild dogs in November 2007 as he struggled to protect his pet dog from their attack.

Although the boy managed to survive the vicious dog attack, the left side of his face was almost torn off and his two ears were bitten off, the statement said.

The gruesome attack caused a stir in Kiribati society after it was reported in the country's news media, the statement said. The Republic of China's embassy in Kiribati later asked Mackay hospital whether it would be willing to provide free treatment or cosmetic surgery for the child, the MOFA added.

In May 2008, Mackay sent a certified plastic surgeon to join a government-backed mobile medical team on a mission to offer free medical services in that country.

The surgeon examined the boy, administered treatment and assessed the feasibility of him having further treatment and plastic surgery in Taipei.

At the end of the day, Mackay agreed to help arrange for the child, accompanied by a Kiribati caregiver, to travel to Taipei to receive cosmetic surgery free of charge. The hospital will also provide free meals and accommodation for both of them during the six-month treatment period.

The child is scheduled to undergo the first phase of plastic surgery Jan. 15 and the whole treatment process is expected to be completed on July 7, the MOFA statement quoted Mackay management as saying.

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

January 15, 1999

Managaha bidder seeks to halt new rebidding
The Marianas Marine Management, Inc., a locally-owned corporation seeking to operate Managaha Island, has prodded the Division of Procurement and Supply to force the Board of Public Lands to decide on the next concessionaire of the popular tourist destination based on proposals previously submitted to BPL. In a protest lodged January 12, MMM, through its legal counsel Jesus C. Borja, asked the procurement and supply division to stop BPL from its plan to seek fresh proposals to develop Managaha, a tiny island west of Saipan. MMM said the next operator of Managaha should be selected based on the RFP issued in August, prior to the enactment of a controversial law giving preference to corporations and individuals of NMI descent to develop the island for commercial purposes.

All systems go for 902 talks
Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio yesterday said the CNMI 902 team is all set to resume negotiations under the Section 702 of the Covenant with White House officials despite irreconcilable positions of the two governments on how talks should proceed. The governor told an interview the seven-man panel, led by Lt. Gov. Jesus R. Sablan, are prepared to meet with Washington negotiators beginning Tuesday for a four-day bilateral talks aimed at resolving differences in implementing local immigration and minimum wage laws. Amid Tenorio's optimism, the two sides are still at loggerheads over the parameters of discussions that is threatening to put talks on a shaky start after two cancellations last year.

January 15, 2001

Sweeney: Continue lobby efforts in DC
Saying the Clinton administration has been unfair in providing members of the U.S. Congress the real situation in the CNMI, Rep. John E. Sweeney (R-NY) emphasized Saturday the need to continue lobbying efforts in Washington so as to thwart attempts of a federal takeover. "I think they (Clinton administration) have turned a blind eye. I suspect that they have done it with other motivations in mind," he said. Sweeney told business leaders during the installation of the new officers of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce that they have an important role to play in informing the people in Washington about CNMI's efforts to become self-sustaining and carry out changes to make life better for the people.

'To save millions, cut House seats to 15'
The number of seats at the House of Representatives should be pruned to 15 or even 12 in order to save taxpayers millions of dollars in government expenditures that can be used to fund other critical programs on the islands. This was the suggestion of Senate Vice President Thomas P. Villagomez who broached the idea in light of the forthcoming conference in Dallas, Texas that will tackle re-districting of legislative representation across the country. He said the result of the recent census should encourage CNMI officials to look into the composition of the lower house, particularly on Saipan, to shift the number of representatives. At present, the House has 18 seats.

January 15, 2002

Hard work begins for new administration
Gov. Juan N. Babauta and Lt. Gov. Diego Benavente will buckle down to work and start addressing social and economic problems facing the Northern Marianas, as they were officially inducted to office yesterday morning. "Yes, we're ready to work," Babauta told hundreds of guests who attended his administration's inauguration at the American Memorial Park Amphitheater. Babauta said his administration will tap available local and federal resources, as well as explore other funding sources, to spur economic activities in the Northern Marianas.

Downpour fails to dampen rites
Sporadic rain showers greeted the joint inauguration rites of the Commonwealth's three highest-ranking public officials at the American Memorial Park yesterday. But rain or shine, the crowd of zealous attendees were not dissuaded from staying until the end of the installation ceremony. Others viewed the infrequent downpour as a blessing—a premonition of good fortune for the Northern Marianas in the hands of the new administration. "The audience didn't mind being soaked from the rain. They were just glad to be there," said Gordon Marciano, one of the hundreds of attendees.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Bush's 'what ifs'

George W. Bush made it clear during his final presidential news conference Monday that he wants to be remembered as a decisive president who followed his convictions about the best way to protect and strengthen his country, even though they were often unpopular with "some of the writers and the, you know, opiners and all that." Unfortunately, Bush still doesn't recognize that holding firm beliefs and sticking to them aren't nearly as important as being right.

Bush did offer some acknowledgments of the mistakes he'd made in his eight-year term, but they were few and grudging. Mostly, he was combative toward his critics and defensive about his record—hardly unusual for a president in his final week in office, a time for talking up one's accomplishments and burnishing one's legacy. It's just that in Bush's case, it's hard to escape the conclusion that he actually believes his own spin.

Bush's inability or unwillingness to admit his own failures is well known, but his pained efforts to address them Monday only made them seem more glaring. Asked about the nation's moral standing abroad, Bush denied that it has been diminished at all, except perhaps among Europeans and other "elites." On Hurricane Katrina, he positioned himself as the victim of unfair criticism for not landing Air Force One in New Orleans or Baton Rouge in the immediate aftermath—as if this, and not the federal government's disastrously slow response, was the real focus of controversy. He forgave himself for his role in the country's economic meltdown by pointing out that he took office during a recession and presided over 52 months of job growth before things went bad—without mentioning that he did it by increasing government spending and cutting taxes at the same time, turning a federal surplus into a punishing deficit that will make recovering from today's woes far harder.

Yet if Bush's last hurrah with the White House press corps pointed up many of his biggest failings, it also was a reminder of why so many people voted for him in 2000 and 2004. Inarticulate but charming, he joshed his way through the event while making compelling points about the need for the Republican Party to be more inclusive, the importance of Social Security reform and the benefits of free trade. It's enough to make one wonder what might have been if 9/11 hadn't happened—if Bush hadn't had a reason to send troops overseas or reinvent the national security apparatus, but had been able to concentrate on the domestic issues on which he's far more conversant, and on being a "uniter, not a divider." There's a chance he might have been a half-decent president.

Not a strong chance, mind you.

(c) 2009, Los Angeles Times

Give yourself a raise

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is a partner with BizResults, LLC (www.bizresults.org). They can be contacted at biz_results@yahoo.com.

Reduced budgets, four day work weeks, and layoffs are the realities that have many people concerned about their jobs and their paycheck. If you're a business owner, you have probably had to cut some costs to stay competitive. There's nothing wrong with cutting waste and efficiency, but in the history of the world, no business has ever made a fortune by simply cutting costs.

Many companies are marking down their prices in an attempt to increase their sales, and for some this strategy is working, while for others it is only hastening their demise because it is cutting into their contribution margin and making it even more difficult to pay expenses. Many are even operating at a loss, with the hope that the economy will turn around soon, or something will happen before they are forced to close their doors. Good luck.

Larger companies that buy in bulk or can demand lower prices from vendors have an advantage when it comes to pricing. Wal-Mart can sell for less because they buy for less. If customers view your business or product as a commodity, then a change in price will cause a change in the quantity demanded. Lowering the selling price usually results in an increase in the customer's demand, and vice versa. Therefore, your ability to raise prices without lowering the demand is dependent upon your ability to create a real or perceived advantage in the minds of your customers.

Let's look at a strategy that very few businesses take during difficult times. Instead of lowering prices, try giving yourself a raise. Depending on your profit margin, a price increase can make a huge impact on your bottom line. Let's say you sell a product for $50. Now, for each customer ask yourself: "If I raised my price by 2 percent, would I really lose the customer?" If the answer is no, then try 5 percent, 8 percent, and 10 percent.

What you'll find is that some customers cannot take a price increase, while others can take 2, 5, 8, or 10 percent. A 10-percent increase would put $5 in your pocket, and if you sold 1,000 units per month, it would give you $5,000 extra dollars you could take to the bank (after paying taxes, of course). Even a 2-percent increase would give you an extra dollar, which would amount to an extra $1,000 per month. If your margins were low and you were clearing about $5,000 on that one product, you just gave yourself a 20-percent increase on profits.

Now before you discount this as heretical doctrine, consider that businesses that have implemented this strategy properly have noticed a slight decline in sales, no lost money, and profits went up. What is really bizarre is that some businesses will actually see their sales volume increase because some customers equate higher price with better quality. That's why some perfume, clothing, watches, and other products positioned as non-commodity items can get away with outrageous price tags.

WARNING & DISCLAIMER: *Most of the businesses on Saipan cannot use this strategy because they have positioned their business and products as a commodity, played pricing catch with their competitors, and therefore trained their customers to be very price sensitive.*

Now, to pull off this bit of pricing prestidigitation in the midst of the most serious recession the world has seen in generations, you would need to raise the perceived value of that $50 product. That way, your most price-conscious customers feel like they are getting a better deal by paying you more than your low-priced competitor.

This is where you need to analyze the value your product offers to your customers. Your total offer is every element of value that your customers feel they get when they purchase your product. These elements can include such things as the product or service itself, associated services or products, your customer support, convenience, location, selection, guarantee, warranty, policies, terms, reliability, availability, and reputation.

Most businesses emphasize only a few of these elements, but the more you have, the greater the perceived value your product or service will have in your customer's mind. Or you may have a killer value proposition that your regular customers know exists, but prospects are not aware of it. A quick example is a used car dealer I worked with in the U.S. The owner and son had been in business for over 30 years and they had loyal customers who moved away and would travel over 100 miles, past a dozen car dealers, to buy a used car from them. His prices were higher than your typical used car place and sales were good, but he wanted to get more new customers. When I dug deeper into his business, I found that he used a meticulous checklist to evaluate a car and make sure it was worthy to sell to his customers. When asked if he told people who visited his car lot about his procedure, he said he didn't because his good customers already knew it. When he started telling prospective customers about his process, price became less of an issue and his sales went up.

If you're not happy with the money you get to keep after paying expenses, try asking your customers for a raise. If you've increased the total value offer, they'll be happy to pay you more because they will feel they're getting more.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, Century Insurance Building, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Pacific's stability threatened by Beijing-Taipei recognition battle

Editor's Note: Frequent Pacific Islands traveler David C. Henley, who last year spent 10 days in the CNMI and Guam and three weeks in China, is a foreign correspondent and former Western U.S. daily newspaper owner who covers international diplomatic, economic and military issues in Asia, Europe and Latin America. A former USC journalism professor, he is a member of the Board of Trustee of Chapman University in California and serves on the External Advisory Board of the University's MA degree program in international studies.

By DAVID C. HENLEY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Because the CNMI is in a unique political union with the Unites States, it is not an independent nation and thus does not have its own official foreign policy and does not exchange ambassadors with any of the world's 194 sovereign nations.

This same "colonial" relationship, of course, holds for the four other U.S overseas holdings, the Pacific territories of Guam and American Samoa and its Caribbean entities of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S Virgin Islands. Despites, however, the reliance of the CNMI and the four other U.S. possessions on the United States to formulate a nationwide foreign policy, their residents should be aware of the escalating political drama being played out between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) which greatly influences the stability if the Pacific area as well as other regions of the world, particularly the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa.

This continuing drama relates to the problem of diplomatic recognition. At present, only 23 nations recognize the ROC, and most of these 23 are tiny and poor with minuscule populations. The vast majority of the nations of the world, including the larger and influential slates, recognize the PRC. Here in the Pacific, the nations recognizing the ROC are Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Palua, the Solomon Islands and Nauru. Representing the PRC are Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tonga and Vanuatu.

In Africa, the only nations that recognize the ROC are Sao Tome and Principe, Burkina Faso, Gambia and Swaziland. In the Caribbean and Latin America, only Belize, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines recognize the ROC. The only European state to recognize the ROC is The Vatican. Particularly in the Pacific, this ongoing competition for diplomatic recognition between the PRC and the ROC has resulted in dangerous "one-upmanship" between the two nations which has brought forth a form of "checkbook diplomacy" that has spawned corruption in various small nations whose leaders have often played off the two Chinas to gain financial rewards for themselves, their families and their political allies.

In some instance, the diplomatic musical chairs between Taiwan and the PRC has been even comical. During a governmental crisis a few years ago in Nauru, for example, the nation's presidency changed hands three or four times in as many days. Prospective ambassadors from the PRC and the ROC were billeted in adjoining rooms in a hotel awaiting word on who would obtain the presidency that day and whether that president would recognize either the PRC of the ROC. Each ambassador-designate has his own nation's flag and would run outside the hotel and raise it over a temporary embassy building when his country was anointed to represent China by Nauru's "president for the day."

Both the PRC and the ROC give massive financial aid to these struggling Pacific nations as well as free travel abroad for their respective leaders and their families. Financial aid comes in the form of road building, airport construction, agricultural and fishery assistance, and the like. When the government of the Marshall Islands, for example, ousted its long-time president earlier last year, the new president questioned the wisdom of maintaining ties with Taiwan and hinted he would switch sides and recognize Beijing instead. He has backtracked on this, however, and says he will continue recognizing Taiwan after being told the PRC will financially bail out the nation's only air carrier, Air Marshall Islands, which has not been in operation since last year because its three airplanes have been laid up with engine and other problems. In another Pacific nation, Papua New Guinea, a further diplomatic flap relating to the game of PRC-ROC tug of war came to a head in May last year when the ROC foreign minister and several top aides were forced to resign following their botched and unsuccessful attempt to wrest recognition for the ROC from the PRC by offering $30 million to PNG officials.

Across the world in the poor and landlocked South American nation of Paraguay, the newly-elected president of that country, leftist Fernando Lugo who defeated the candidate of the long-ruling rightist Colorado Party that had always recognized the ROC, allegedly demanded $71 million in new aid from the ROC in exchange for continued ROC recognition. Lugo denies the allegation and he is still vacillating on whether to switch recognition to Beijing. The U.S. is in the middle of this diplomatic dance. The U.S. switched recognition to the PRC from the ROC in 1979, but continues to support Taiwan militarily. And the United States has permitted Taiwan to establish 12 ROC Economic and Cultural offices that serves as semi-diplomatic bastions, although the offices' directors are accorded no official diplomatic recognition.

Two of these offices are in the Pacific; one in Honolulu and the other in Guam. The latter is located in Hagatna in the Bank of Guam Building on Chalan Santo Papa Rd. As this diplomatic combat between Beijing and Taipei continues unabated, all of us who wish to see the rise of political stability and economic growth in the Pacific should be concerned. Harmony and successful development in the Pacific region cannot reach their full potential if the negatives brought about by the bruising PRC-ROC diplomatic conflict increase in scope and fervor.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Martin

Woodie W. White, retired United Methodist Bishop and MLK, Jr.'s contemporary and friend, has been writing an annual "Dear Martin" letter since 1976 during King's birthday anniversary. Martin the man was born Jan. 15, 1929 (originally named Michael and later changed to Martin) and was felled on a motel balcony on April 4, 1968. This year, Martin the iconic hero is remembered and his civil rights legacy celebrated on Monday, Jan. 19.

I choose to remember Martin the man just so my recollections remain in the authentic plane. When he spoke to our group one February morning in 1968 less than a couple of months before the tragic April evening in Memphis, at Abe Lincoln's historic New York Ave. Presbyterian Church on 13th St., 10 blocks away from the White House, he was just another regular guy. Of course, he had received his Nobel Prize award for Peace by then, but like the rest of us in his captive audience, he got up that morning pulling his trousers up one leg at a time.

The pictures I had taken of him locked in arms with people like his anti-war colleague Abraham Herschel during the march to Arlington Cemetery across the Potomac, was the look of a determined but apprehensive man who was, after all, in the unenviable posture of pronouncing "truth to power" in the war on poverty and civil rights administration of President Johnson's Washington, D.C. A modest man of deep humility, he was not yet the invincible man portrayed in post-I've-been-to-the-mountaintop prophet that proliferates today.

In reports about one of MLK's heroes, Gandhi, it was reported that Vince Walker of *The New York Times* while interviewing Gandhi in South Africa at his first ashram, remarked: "You're an ambitious man, Mr. Gandhi." Gandhi replied: "I hope not." Gandhi was another modest man of deep humility who pulled his trousers up in the morning one leg at a time.

An earlier first-among-many-brothers of Woodie and Martin (and Gandhi), as narrated in the synoptic gospel narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke, found the man Yeshua (Iesous in Greek, Jesus in English) from Nazareth standing in a posture of transfiguration with Hebrew ancestors Moses and Elijah. A disciple named Peter, the excitable and quick-to-the-draw one, proposed to his companions James and John that they build three tents of remembrance to commemorate the mystical appearance of the three revered figures together. Jesus elicited a vow of silence from his disciples instead.

In a well-known quote from the introduction to *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Joseph Campbell summarized the monomyth he posited as normative to many myths around the world: *A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."*

The Jesus hero has since had numerous reincarnations in many cultures around the world, the most recent in the world of celluloid being Clark Kent and Superman, and variations of the same theme up to the most recent one called Iron Man.

In all, to use the metaphor of the synoptic gospels, the guy of our common identity suddenly becomes transfigured into a tent! As a recent commentator on Saipan said, when a finger is pointed to the rainbow on Tinian, there are those who witness the rainbow, and in their aesthetics of aesthetics, they are richly blessed. Then there are those who look at the finger and never get to see the rainbow, for they are too fixated on the finger, obsessively determined to make a figure out of the finger, build it an altar, venerate it as an object of epiphany, or at least, a profitable handicraft for commerce and trade.

Our dear Martin has become such as well, I am afraid. Our friends, and I am sure they mean well, orchestrating this Monday's celebration titled their essay contest in response to the Barack Obama presidential election with: "What would Martin say?" Not too many years ago, some of our earnest Christian leaders came up with the question of "What would Jesus do?" as an ethical guideline. Of course, every Tom, Dick and Harry, not to mention Pam, Kate and Mary, who had any strong religious conviction and/or moralistic compulsion, took advantage of the Jesus-cover and promoted their brand of sectarian ideology and morality. The same dynamic could very well apply here, with our youth stuffing Martin's mouth with their own frustrations and hopes of 2009.

It is doubly ironic that the man who would dream that someday his "children would be judged not by the color of their skin but with the content of their character" will now have a day celebrated in his name, not by the content of his character but by the color of his skin!

To be sure, Obama's election is significant to the cause of "colored" people. A year ago, the junior senator from Illinois announced his candidacy in front of the State Assembly where a hundred years before, mobs of white people in two days of rioting, burned black people's homes in Springfield. As a direct consequence of the incident, a group of people gathered in New York and organized the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the En Double Aye Sea Pea!

The United States seems to operate in centennial cycles. Almost a century would last from the declaration of independence to the civil war, another century from the Lincoln assassination to that of John F. Kennedy, the latter dampening the high note of hope and anticipation generated by the August March to Washington in '63 that Kennedy eventually supported for as long as it enhanced the chances of the civil rights legislation he was pushing in Congress.

MLK Jr. would join the executive committee of the NAACP, which celebrates its 100th year anniversary this year a couple of weeks after the inauguration of Obama's presidency. But the challenge to the new President goes beyond the dialectical contradiction inherent in racism. Already, the broad spectrum represented by the religious right in Rick Warren and the progressive left with Joe Lowery, respectively giving the invocation and benediction at the Inauguration, is indicative of the style President Obama intends to run his administration.

Can we create an umbrella big enough for everyone to engage in creative dialogue and constructive conversations? This question has been asked of America before. The difference this time has to do with the competing proponents, globally and locally. Instead of sharpening their casket of wits or honing their musket of wisdom to staff both sides of just another sweltering debate, they are rolling up their sleeves and asking what part of their agenda they can begin working on, allowing the other side to proceed with their own without getting on each other's way. The crisis situation and worldwide catastrophe that has descended upon us in a shattered global economy, and rapidly deteriorating and blatantly dysfunctional political context, may just very well allow us to discover how much we have in common, and who knows, *We Shall Overcome* might actually and finally become more than just the title of a song.

Jaime Vergara
via e-mail

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Mostly sunny with a slight chance of light showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°	▲87° ▼78°

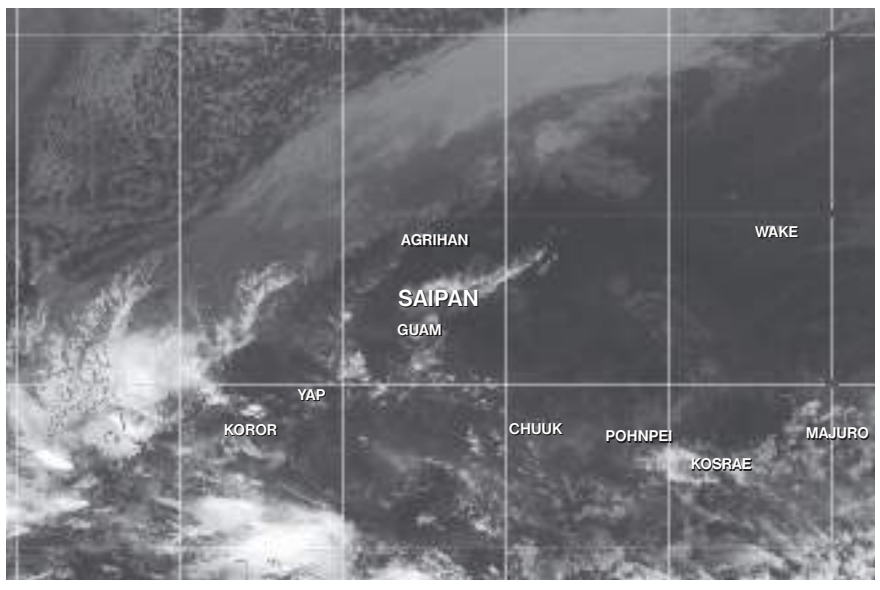
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	▲84	▼75
Palau	Cloudy	▲85	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲85	▼77
Chuuk	Showers	▲88	▼77
Pohnpei	Rain	▲82	▼77
Kosrae	Showers	▲85	▼77
Majuro	Showers	▲84	▼75

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲74	▼68
Beijing	Sunny	▲41	▼11
Hong Kong	Sunny	▲67	▼59
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	▲80	▼70
London	Mostly Cloudy	▲41	▼36
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲82	▼50
Manila	Dreary	▲79	▼69
Melbourne	Cloudy	▲78	▼52
Miami	Showers	▲70	▼51
New York	Snow	▲28	▼ 8
Osaka	Showers	▲42	▼28
Paris	Cloudy	▲36	▼35
Pusan	Sunny	▲42	▼23
Rome	Mostly Cloudy	▲50	▼32
Salem	Cloudy	▲49	▼29
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲66	▼46
Seoul	Sunny	▲34	▼21
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲45	▼31
Washington, DC	Partly Sunny	▲32	▼15

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:15PM, WEDNESDAY, JAN. 14, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A shear line extends northwestward from 10N130E to north of the Marianas over Minami Torishima and ending at 25N159E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms extend 140 miles north the shear line from 8N130E to 16N137E. Patchy showers and cloudiness are located 400 miles northwest of the shear line. A weak surface trough just east of the Marianas extends from 10N146E northward to 15N146E is producing isolated showers bounded by a line from 10N140E to 14N140E to 17N150E to 10N145E back to 10N140E. A surface trough is located southeast of Majuro and extends from EQ174E northward to 6N174E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are located north of the trough between 5N and 9N from 173E to 178E. Trade-wind showers are located south of Kwajelein within 80 miles of a line from 5N160E to 5N166E then northeastward to 7N172E. This area includes Kosrae and Majuro. A near-equatorial trough extends from a surface circulation west of the discussion area from 7N127E southeastward to EQ146E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are located south of the trough axis between EQ and 4N from 130E to 140E.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
4:35AM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet
11:15AM Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet
5:29PM Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
10:35PM Today	High Tide:	1.7 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:47AM	6:06 PM
Friday	6:47AM	6:07 PM
Saturday	6:47AM	6:07 PM
Sunday	6:47AM	6:08 PM
Monday	6:47AM	6:08 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	10:11PM	9:48 AM
Friday	11:03PM	10:27 AM
Saturday	11:35PM	11:05 AM
Sunday		11:44 AM
Monday	12:46AM	12:24 PM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

PICTURES

- ISLAND SNAPSHOTS
  Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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For pictures:

- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

HOW TO SUBMIT

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- Fax: (670) 235-3740
- Mail: PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan, CNMI 96950
- Drop off: 2nd Floor, CIC Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
  To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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- The *Saipan Tribune* will decide how often community announcements are going to be published.
- For Travelogue, the *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to choose which pictures to publish.

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Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

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ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2009

DEPARTURES

Saipan-Rota			
CO9597	11:50am	12:25pm	1,7
Saipan-Guam			
CO9317	5:00am	5:50am	Daily
CO9313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
CO9597	11:50am	1:20pm	1,7 via Rota
CO9601	12:30pm	1:20pm	2,3,4,5,6
CO9603	3:30pm	4:20pm	Daily
CO9605	6:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
CO9599	9:30pm	10:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Narita			
NW 099	5:00am	7:35am	Daily
NW 078	8:20am	1:30pm	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 075	4:55pm	7:30pm	Daily
Guam-Narita			
NW 73	4:10pm	7:00pm	Daily
NW 81	3:55pm	6:55pm	Daily
Saipan-Osaka			
OZ 119	4:00am	6:40am	1,4,6
NW 083	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Guam-Osaka			
NW 79	4:45pm	7:35pm	Daily
Saipan-Nagoya			
NW 078	8:20am	11:05am	Daily
Guam-Nagoya			
NW 23	4:30pm	7:20pm	Daily
Saipan-Incheon			
OZ 604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ 604	2:40am	6:30am	2,3,4,5,6,7
OZ 119	4:00am	11:25am	1,4,6 via Osaka
OZ 606	3:20pm	7:00pm	Daily
Saipan-Busan			
OZ 608	3:20am	6:50am	1,4,5,7
Saipan-Shanghai			
FM 844	2:50am	5:40am	2,6
Rota-Guam			
CO 9597	12:50pm	1:20pm	1,7
Guam-Palau			
CO 953	7:40pm	8:40pm	1,7
CO 893	5:50pm	6:50pm	3,5
Palau-Manila			
CO 893	7:35pm	9:10pm	3,5
Guam-Manila			
CO 893	5:50pm	9:10pm	3,5 via Koror
CO 933	8:00pm	9:40pm	Daily
PR 111	6:00am	7:50am	1,2,4,6,7
Nagoya-Manila			
NW 71	8:40pm	11:55pm	Daily
Incheon-Hongkong			
OZ 721	9:20am	12:00pm	Daily
OZ 723	7:45pm	10:35pm	Daily
OZ 7173	8:00pm	10:50pm	5,7
Narita-Manila			
NW 1	7:00pm	10:55pm	Daily

ARRIVALS

Rota-Saipan			
CO 9598	3:25am	4:00am	5,6
Guam-Saipan			
CO 9316	2:30am	3:20am	1,2,3,4,7
CO9598	2:30am	4:00am	5,6 via Rota
CO9596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
CO9600	10:20am	11:10am	Daily
CO9602	2:00pm	2:50pm	Daily
CO9604	5:00pm	5:50pm	Daily
CO9606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily
Narita-Saipan			
NW 076	10:15am	2:40pm	Daily
NW 077	6:25pm	1:20am+1	2,3,4,5,6,7
NW 100	8:45pm	1:10am+1	Daily
Narita-Guam			
NW 74	9:45am	2:20pm	Daily
NW 82	10:30am	3:10pm	Daily
Osaka-Saipan			
OZ 120	9:50pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7
NW 084	10:40am	3:05pm	Daily
Osaka-Guam			
NW 80	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily
Nagoya-Saipan			
NW 077	9:00pm	1:20am+1	Daily
Nagoya-Guam			
NW 24	10:00am	2:30pm	Daily
Incheon-Saipan			
OZ 605	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ 603	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ 120	7:10pm	2:20am+1	3,5,7 via Osaka
OZ 603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1,2,3,4,5,6
Busan-Saipan			
OZ 607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	3,4,6,7
Shanghai-Saipan			
FM 843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1,5
Guam-Rota			
CO 9598	2:30am	3:00am	5,6
Palau-Guam			
CO 954	2:30am	5:25am	1,2
CO 892	2:35am	5:30am	4,6
Manila-Palau			
CO 892	10:10pm	1:50am+1	3,5
Manila-Guam			
CO 892	10:10pm	5:30am+1	3,5 via Koror
CO 934	11:10pm	4:40am+1	Daily
PR 110	10:10pm	4:00am+1	1,3,5,6,7
Manila-Nagoya			
NW 72	6:30am	11:05am	Daily
Hongkong-Incheon			
OZ 724	12:30am	4:50am	Daily
OZ 7183	12:45am	5:05am	1,4,6
OZ 722	1:30pm	5:45pm	Daily
Manila-Narita			
NW 2	7:45am	12:40pm	Daily

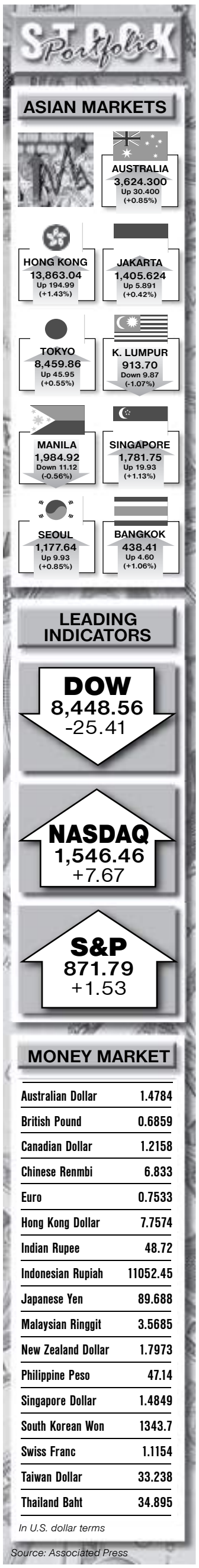
Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business



Bernanke: Obama stimulus helps, more action needed

LONDON (AP)—A mammoth stimulus package being crafted by President-elect Barack Obama could give the economy a much-needed lift, but other steps must be taken to bolster the wobbly financial system and for any recovery to stick, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said Tuesday.

Specifically, Bernanke suggested the government inject more money into banks. He also offered options to deal with rotten mortgages and other bad assets held by financial institutions, a problem that has contributed to a lockup in lending. Bernanke also again called for the government to do more to curb home foreclosures.

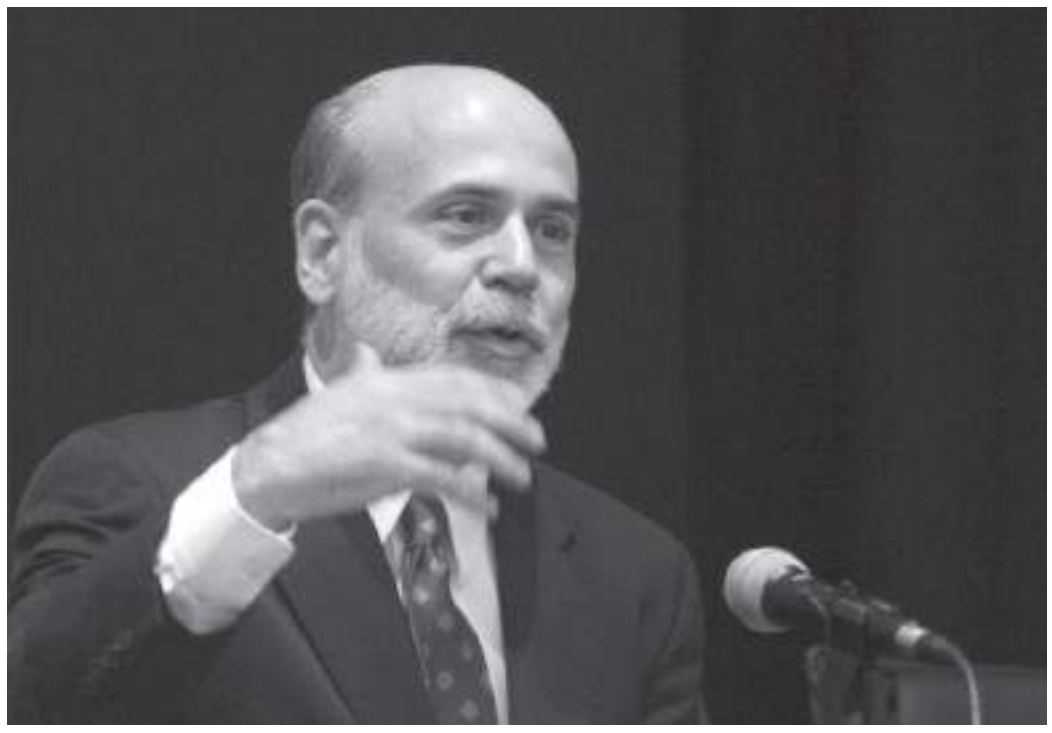
■■■

WASHINGTON (AP)—Tested before taking power, President-elect Barack Obama privately delivered a pre-inauguration veto threat to fellow Democrats on Tuesday, saying they would not deny him use of the remaining $350 billion in federal bailout funds.

Obama coupled his threat with a promise to revise elements of the original bailout program that have drawn widespread criticism, pledging that billions will go toward helping homeowners facing foreclosure. Several Democrats said his commitments, to be made in writing, would be enough to prevent an embarrassing pre-inauguration drubbing for the president-elect when the Senate votes this week.

"This will be the first vote that President-elect Obama is asking us for. I'll be shocked and I'll be really disappointed if he doesn't get it," said Sen. Joseph Lieberman, an independent Democrat from Connecticut.

"This is a new beginning."



AP

U.S. Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke delivers a speech to the London School of Economics in London, Tuesday Jan. 13, 2009.

Behind closed doors, Obama also urged lawmakers to act quickly on the massive economic stimulus measure that his aides have been negotiating with congressional officials. The legislation will blend federal spending with tax cuts, and could reach $1 trillion in size, a measure of the nation's economic woes.

■■■

The Fed chief's extensive remarks, in a speech at the London School of Economics, come at a critical time as the U.S. gets ready to change its political and economic guard from President George W. Bush to Obama next week.

Bernanke's idea of giving more federal money to banks, and his mention of the fund's original intent of buying up their toxic assets, could affect the argument over whether to release the second $350 billion in bailout money. Obama favors broadening the bailout program to help distressed homeowners.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Treasury: Deficit hits new record in just 3 months

WASHINGTON (AP)—The federal government already has run up a record deficit of $485.2 billion in just the first three months of the current budget year. And economists say the imbalance for the full year could easily top $1 trillion, pushed to that eye-popping level by the spending the government is likely to do to combat the recession and the most severe financial crisis in generations. The Treasury Department reported Tuesday that the deficit for December totaled $83.6 billion, a sharp deterioration from a year ago when the government managed a surplus of $48.3 billion. All the red ink comes from the massive spending out of the financial rescue program—$247 billion out of $700 billion spent so far—and a prolonged recession that has depressed tax revenues. The overall deficit from October through December is the highest on record for a first quarter and surpasses the mark for a full budget year of $454.8 billion set last year.

Yahoo names tech veteran Carol Bartz as new CEO

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Yahoo Inc. named technology veteran Carol Bartz as its new chief executive Tuesday, bringing in a no-nonsense leader known for developing a clear focus—something that has eluded the struggling Internet company during a three-year slump. The decision to lure Bartz, 60, from software maker Autodesk Inc. ends Yahoo's two-month search to replace co-founder Jerry Yang, who surrendered the CEO reins after potentially lucrative deals with rivals Microsoft Corp. and Google Inc. both collapsed. After describing herself as a straight shooter, Bartz told analysts in a conference call that she intended to ensure Yahoo gets "some friggin' breathing room" so the company can "kick some butt." She said it would be presumptuous to share her vision for Yahoo on her first day on the job. "I wouldn't have taken the job if I didn't believe there was a huge opportunity here," Bartz said before she had to hustle off to her first meeting with Yahoo's top managers.

Manager of buck-breaking fund accused of fraud

BOSTON (AP)—Massachusetts' top securities regulator on Tuesday accused managers of a fallen money-market fund of lying about its safety in an ultimately futile bid to prevent investors from pulling out cash before they suffered almost unprecedented losses in a normally safe type of investment. Secretary of State William Galvin's administrative complaint against Reserve Management Co. comes three weeks after the company that pioneered money-market funds said it expected federal securities regulators to bring a separate civil case against it. That case has not yet been filed. Galvin's complaint alleges Reserve sales workers were directed by managers to reassure investors that they could not lose money, even though Reserve's Primary Fund had made an investment in unsecured debt of Lehman Brothers. That investment totaled about 1 percent of the Primary Fund holdings that stood at $64 billion three days before Lehman's Sept. 15 bankruptcy filing.

Oil finishes higher on Bernanke comments

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Crude futures halted a weeklong price slide Tuesday, nudging higher after Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said the stimulus package could provide a "significant boost" to the sinking U.S. economy.

After rebounding to a high of $50.47 one week ago, crude has fallen nearly 30 percent as a weakening global economy overshadowed Mideast tensions, OPEC production cuts, an international natural gas dispute and even predictions of an extremely cold winter.

Light, sweet crude for February delivery rose 19 cents to settle at $37.78 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange after falling to $36.10 earlier, a new low for the year.

In London, February Brent crude rose $1.92 to settle at $44.83 a barrel on the ICE Futures exchange.

Oil prices rose in early trading after Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said the $700 billion financial rescue program was needed to combat the worst financial crisis to hit the U.S. and the global economy since the 1930s.

"The incoming administration and the Congress are currently discussing a substantial fiscal package that, if enacted, could provide a significant boost to economic activity," Bernanke said.

Geithner failed to pay self-employment taxes

WASHINGTON (AP)—President-elect Barack Obama's choice to run the Treasury Department and lead the nation's economic rescue failed to pay $34,000 in taxes from 2001 to 2004, but the last-minute disclosure didn't stop Senate Democrats from moving forward with his nomination.

Timothy Geithner paid most of the past-due taxes days before Obama announced his choice in November, according to materials released by the Senate Finance Committee considering his nomination. He had paid the remainder of the taxes in 2006, after the IRS sent him a bill.

The still-unpaid taxes were discovered by Obama's transition team while investigating Geithner's background. Obama's staff told senators about the tax issues Dec. 5.

Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., said he still hoped Geithner could be confirmed on Inauguration Day, asking senators for unanimous consent to skirt rules and schedule a hearing as early as Friday.

Citigroup, Morgan Stanley merge brokerages

NEW YORK (AP)—Citigroup Inc. and Morgan Stanley agreed Tuesday to combine their brokerages in a deal that shows how much Citigroup wants to slim down and build up cash.

Morgan Stanley is paying Citigroup $2.7 billion for a 51 percent stake in the joint venture. Citigroup will have a 49 percent stake.

Citigroup's retail brokerage, Smith Barney, was once the crown jewel in its wealth management business.

The new unit, to be called Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, will have more than 20,000 advisors, $1.7 trillion in client assets; and serve 6.8 million households around the world, the companies said.

Citigroup will recognize a pretax gain of about $9.5 billion because of the deal, or about $5.8 billion after taxes, the companies said. The joint venture is expected to achieve total cost savings for the two companies of around $1.1 billion.

The deal was announced after the market closed. Shares of Citigroup rose 30 cents, or 5.4 percent, to $5.90 on Tuesday, and Morgan Stanley shares rose 7 cents to $18.86.

Nation

Clinton seeks a 'smart power' Middle East strategy

WASHINGTON (AP)—Hillary Rodham Clinton said Tuesday that she intends to revitalize the mission of diplomacy in American foreign policy, calling for a "smart power" strategy in the Middle East and implicitly criticizing the Bush administration for having downgraded the role of arms control.

At a daylong confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, President-elect Barack Obama's choice for secretary of state sailed smoothly through an array of non-contentious questions until two Republican committee members pressed her to take additional steps to ensure that former President Bill Clinton's global fundraising work does not pose even an appearance of conflict with her role as the chief U.S. diplomat. She balked, saying disclosure rules already in place were carefully crafted and adequate to avoid any conflict.

Clinton appeared headed for easy confirmation. She encountered no challenges to her basic vision for foreign policy.

Clinton, who will relinquish her seat in the Senate when confirmed, spoke confidently of Obama's intentions to renew American leadership in the world and to strengthen U.S. diplomacy.

"America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America," she said, her daughter Chelsea seated behind her in the audience. "The best way to advance America's interest in reducing global threats and seizing global opportunities is to design and implement global solutions. This isn't a philosophical point. This is our reality."

AP

Secretary of State-designate Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., accompanied by her daughter Chelsea Clinton, listens to introductory remarks on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009, during her confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In laying out a general outlook for American foreign policy under Obama, Clinton spoke in a clear, unhurried voice and looked at ease. She made it plain, citing policy themes that were familiar from Obama's presidential campaign—and in many cases her own—that the incoming Democratic administration wants to elevate the role of diplomacy. She and Obama contend that the Bush administration relied too heavily on the military to carry out foreign policy and that it leaned too much on ideology and too little on pragmatism.

Blagojevich pulls a fast one on the US Senate

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP)—On one side stood the president-elect, 50 Democratic senators on Capitol Hill and just about every politician in Illinois. On the other side was Gov. Rod Blagojevich, criminal defendant and national punchline.

Guess who won?

Blagojevich outfoxed everyone who had warned him not to try to fill the Senate seat he is charged with trying to sell.

Despite the scandal around him, the governor got his way by staring down his opponents with the perfect pick: Roland Burris, a black politician who had an unblemished reputation and big ambitions, guaranteeing he would fight tirelessly for the seat.

Blagojevich also had Illinois law on his side. Moreover, his choice put Democrats in the sticky position of trying to deny entry to the man who would become the chamber's only black member—in the seat that last belonged to Barack Obama, no less.

"It did take a kind of perfect storm, of a governor who is incapable of having scruples and a nominee incapable of shame, to go ahead with it," said Mike Munger, chairman of political science at Duke University. "This was the last card Blagojevich had to play. At least he gets to do something and thumb his nose."

In the end, the Blagojevich-Burris combination proved to be such a distraction that Obama himself reversed course and signaled to Senate leaders that they should seat Burris. Finally, on Monday, they said they would. Vice President Dick Cheney will swear Burris in Thursday on the Senate floor.

Exactly why Blagojevich appointed someone and what he hoped to accomplish are something of a mystery to some political observers. The Democratic governor still faces federal corruption charges. And he has been impeached and faces a state Senate trial later this month that could get him thrown him out of office.

Parachuting investor caught in Fla. after fleeing

HARPERSVILLE, Ala. (AP)—With his world crumbling around him, investment adviser Marcus Schrenker opted for a bailout. However, his plan to escape personal turmoil was short-lived.

In a feat reminiscent of a James Bond movie, the 38-year-old businessman and amateur daredevil pilot apparently tried to fake his death in a plane crash, secretly parachuting to the ground and speeding away on a motorcycle he had stashed away in the pine barrens of central Alabama.

But the captivating three-day saga came to an end when authorities finally caught up to Schrenker at a North Florida campground where he had apparently tried to take his own life, said Alabama-based U.S. Marshals spokesman Michael Richards.

Schrenker was taken into custody around 10 p.m. EST after officers from the U.S. Marshal's office in Tallahassee, Fla., found him inside a tent at a campground in nearby Quincy, Richards said.

"He had cut one of his wrists, but he is still alive," Richards said.

The missing pilot was tracked down after investigators developed leads that he might be in Florida and forwarded to U.S. Marshals officers there, Richards said.

Schrenker was on the run not only from the law but from divorce, a state investigation of his businesses and angry investors who accuse him of stealing potentially millions in savings they entrusted to him.

"We've learned over time that he's a pathological liar—you don't believe a single word that comes out of his mouth," said Charles Kinney, a 49-year-old airline pilot from Atlanta who alleges Schrenker pocketed at least $135,000 of his parents' retirement fund.

The events of the past few days appeared to be a last, desperate gambit by a man who had fallen from great heights and was about to hit bottom.

On Sunday—two days after burying his beloved stepfather and suffering a half-million-dollar loss in federal court the same day—Schrenker was flying his single-engine Piper Malibu to Florida from his Indiana home when he radioed from 2,000 feet that he was in trouble. He told the tower the windshield had imploded, and that his face was plastered with blood.

Shocking cold wave drops temps to 40 below zero

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Temperatures crashed to Arctic levels Tuesday as a severe cold wave rolled across the upper Midwest on the heels of yet another snowstorm, closing schools and making most people think twice before going outside.

Thermometers read single digits early in the day as far south as Kansas and Missouri, where some areas warmed only into the teens by midday.

The ice and snow that glazed pavement was blamed for numerous traffic accidents from Minnesota to Indiana, where police said a truck overturned and spilled 43,000 pounds of cheese, closing a busy highway ramp during the night in the Gary area.

The bitter cold snap was responsible for at least one death Tuesday.

A 51-year-old man in northern Wisconsin died from exposure after wandering from his Hayward home early Tuesday, authorities said. His son reported him missing and said he was prone to sleepwalking, and deputies followed footprints in the snow to find the man about 190 yards from his house, Sawyer County Chief Deputy Tim Zeigle said.

Some Minnesotans took it as just another winter day, even in the state's extreme northwest corner where thermometers bottomed out at 38 degrees below zero at the town of Hallock and the National Weather Service said the wind chill was a shocking 58 below.

"It's really not so bad," Robert Cameron, 75, said as he and several friends gathered for morning coffee at the Cenex service station in Hallock. "We've got clothing that goes with the weather. ... We're ready and rolling, no matter what."

"It's so beautiful. There's not a cloud in the sky," said Keith Anderson, 66. But he said that's not stopping him from skipping town at the end of the week to spend a couple of months in Nevada and Arizona.

ACROSS THE NATION

Wash. court: Sex between teachers, 18-year-olds OK

SEATTLE (AP)—Washington state law does not bar teachers from having consensual sex with 18-year-old students, an appeals court ruled Tuesday in dismissing a case against a former high school choir teacher. The teacher, Matthew Hirschfelder, was charged with first-degree sexual misconduct with a minor for allegedly having sex with a Hoquiam High School senior in 2006. He challenged a judge's refusal to dismiss his case, arguing the student wasn't a minor because she was 18. Hirschfelder, who was 33 at the time, also denies any sexual relationship occurred. A three-judge panel of the Washington Court of Appeals unanimously agreed that the case should be dismissed. While the law was written vaguely, a review of legislative history shows that lawmakers only intended to criminalize contact between teachers and 16- or 17-year-old students—not those over 18, the court said.

Police: Calif. dad sold 14-year-old into marriage

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—A California man has been arrested for arranging for his 14-year-old daughter to marry a neighbor in exchange for $16,000, 100 cases of beer and several cases of meat, police said. Authorities in Greenfield, a farming community on California's central coast, said they learned of the deal after Marcelino de Jesus Martinez, 36, asked them for help getting back his daughter after payment wasn't made. Martinez was arrested Sunday. He's scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday in Monterey County Superior Court on felony charges of procuring a child under age 16 for lewd and lascivious acts, statutory rape and cruelty to a child by endangering health, according to the prosecutor. The prosecutor's office said Martinez did not have an attorney of record yet.

Oklahoma authorities: Woman, 4 kids killed in home

EL RENO, Okla. (AP)—A woman and her four young children were killed in their central Oklahoma apartment, and authorities were looking to arrest the mother's 25-year-old boyfriend Tuesday. An officer went to the apartment to check on the welfare of the occupants and found the five bodies shortly after 4 p.m. Monday, said Jessica Brown, a spokeswoman for the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. The children ranged in age from 3 to 7. Brown said at an afternoon news conference that the five were not shot and that a weapon was "not necessarily used." She said more details wouldn't be released until Wednesday or later. Cherokee Ballard, a spokeswoman for the medical examiner, would confirm only that the deaths were homicides.

Tenn. presses TVA for details of ash spill cleanup

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—The state of Tennessee demanded answers and cooperation Tuesday from the nation's largest public utility in the aftermath of a massive coal ash flood that is costing the utility $1 million a day to mop up. "I am committed to making sure this spill is cleaned up and doing everything we can to prevent any similar situation in the future," Gov. Phil Bredesen said in a statement. "I'm also committed to make sure Tennessee taxpayers don't foot the bill." Bredesen promised greater state oversight when he visited the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant shortly after the Dec. 22 spill sent 1.1 billion gallons of ash and sludge into a rural neighborhood surrounding the plant, about 40 miles west of Knoxville. The enforcement order announced by Bredesen and Environment and Conservation Commissioner Jim Fyke reaffirms and formalizes that process, Fyke spokeswoman Tisha Calabrese-Benton said.

Asia

Parents of sick kids reject China's payout plan

BEIJING (AP)—The mother from Hangzhou doesn't let her daughter have any dairy now and worries that her baby's cries signal pain from kidney stones.

Like thousands of parents in China, Yu Lufang has a child who got sick from drinking formula tainted with an industrial chemical. Most youngsters recovered, but the anger remains.

Hundreds of affected parents, including Yu, have banded together to reject a government compensation plan they say was drawn up without their input and doesn't cover enough victims.

The government and Chinese dairy companies had hoped the nationwide scheme would ease tensions over the scandal. Instead, it has given embittered and geographically scattered parents a common cause.

The Health Ministry says 296,000 babies were sickened with kidney stones and other problems after consuming milk powder tainted with melamine, a chemical usually used to make plastics and fertilizers. When ingested in large amounts, it can cause kidney stones and kidney failure.

In this Thursday, Oct. 16, 2008, a worker checks product lines of milk powder in a factory owned by Yili Industrial Group Co., one of China's largest dairy producers, in Hohhot, north China's Inner Mongolia region. AP

Six deaths have been linked to the contamination.

Zhao Lianhai, whose 3-year-old son was sickened by melamine and who was an organizer of the campaign, said Tuesday his group has gathered signatures from more than 200 parents nationwide on a letter demanding changes to the government payout scheme.

The government's plan calls for families whose children died to receive 200,000 yuan ($29,000), while others would receive 30,000 yuan ($4,380) for serious cases of kidney stones and 2,000 yuan ($290) for less severe cases.

The letter says compensation should be based on appraisals of individual cases and not just on broad categories.

Other demands include free medical treatment for babies still recovering, and the lifting of an age limit of three for children eligible for free treatment.

Zhao, whose son has recovered, said the group will continue to gather signatures until Thursday and then submit its letter to the Health Ministry and China's Dairy Industry Association.

NKorea: US must alter 'hostile' policy

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea refused Tuesday to give up its nuclear weapons until after the U.S. alters its "hostile policy" toward the regime and proves it does not pose an atomic threat to the wartime rival.

The cryptic statement from North Korea's Foreign Ministry is the first to lay out North Korea's nuclear stance since the last round of international talks on disarming the North in December.

Analysts say the statement—issued a week before President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration—also sends a strong signal that Pyongyang is keen to forge diplomatic relations with the next U.S. administration.

Stalinist North Korea, one of the world's most isolated countries, has never had diplomatic ties with Washington, which sent troops to back South Korea during the 1950-53 Korean War. Relations warmed under President Bill Clinton but went into a deep freeze when President George W. Bush took office with sharp words for the North.

Eight years later, Pyongyang appears eager to make amends, refraining from its customary New Year's Day diatribe against the U.S. and reportedly offering to send an envoy to Obama's Jan. 20 inauguration.

In Tuesday's statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency, North Korea's Foreign Ministry reiterated its commitment to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. But it said Washington cannot demand that Pyongyang bare its nuclear arsenal without revealing, and removing, its own alleged nuclear weapons in South Korea.

Former Osama bin Laden courier goes on trial

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—A Singaporean who was a courier for Osama bin Laden before the Sept. 11 attacks went on trial in Indonesia on Tuesday with nine other suspected Islamic militants.

The case highlights the lingering threat in Indonesia, home of the 2002 Bali nightclub attacks that thrust the world's most populous Muslim nation onto the front lines in the war on terror.

The indictment said the men are believed to belong to the Southeast Asian terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah, formerly funded by al-Qaida, which is accused of five suicide bombings against Western targets in Indonesia since 2002 that killed more than 240 people, including the Bali attacks.

The lead defendant, Singaporean Mohammad Hasan bin Saynudin, had been on the run for years under multiple false names, allegedly heading a terror cell in his home country and plotting to crash a hijacked airplane into Bangkok's international airport, the indictment said. Prosecutors previously had identified the 35-year-old former English teacher by one of his aliases, Fajar Taslim.

His real name was revealed for the first time Tuesday.

Search for Indonesian ferry survivors fruitless

MAJENE, Indonesia (AP)—Rescue teams returned empty-handed Tuesday from intense search missions in choppy central Indonesian seas, where more than 230 people are missing after a ferry capsized in a cyclone over the weekend.

Hopes were briefly lifted when survivors told authorities they had seen dozens of passengers clinging to a fishing platform. But a police patrol scoured the area for six hours and found nothing, said Lt. Col. Zakarya Rahman, who headed the operation.

Air and sea patrols resumed at sunrise, two days after the 700-ton (635-metric ton) Teratai Prima disappeared with at least 250 passengers and 17 crew onboard.

So far, at least 34 people, including the captain, have been rescued and one body recovered. It has been more than a day since a survivor was found and the chance that anyone is still alive is slim, authorities said.

Many of the survivors floated in the tropical water for more than a day clinging to debris, some keeping up their energy by eating a floating cargo of bananas from the ship, officials said.

An investigation has been started to determine why the captain apparently ignored warnings not to cross the Makassar Strait because of tropical Cyclone Charlotte, Transport Minister Jusman Syafi'i Djamal said earlier Tuesday.

The government will compensate families $2,400, or roughly two times an average annual salary in impoverished Indonesia, for each victim of the accident.

The Teratai Prima, which radioed that it was in trouble just before dawn Sunday, capsized about 30 miles (50 kilometers) off the coast of western Sulawesi. It was headed for Samarinda on the Indonesian side of Borneo.

Boats are a major form of transportation in Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago with more than 17,000 islands. Poor enforcement of safety regulations and overcrowding causes accidents that claim hundreds of lives each year.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Former Japan Cabinet minister quits ruling party

TOKYO (AP)—A former Cabinet member quit Japan's ruling party Tuesday, in a sign of dissent within the party as public support for Prime Minister Taro Aso declines. Lawmaker Yoshimi Watanabe said he left the Liberal Democratic Party because its policies were not aimed at solving problems. He said Aso's political judgment was delaying work on key issues. "I fear that he might invite tragedy to the country and its people." "It was unfortunate," Aso said of Watanabe's departure later Tuesday, declining to comment further. Watanabe is seen by many as a barometer of discontent in the ruling party. But independent political analyst Eiken Itagaki said a mass defection was not likely because many lawmakers depend on the party infrastructure to keep their seats.

Thai writer: End prosecution for 'insulting king'

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—A Thai academic facing charges of insulting the monarchy called Tuesday for a campaign to abolish the law under which he could be jailed for 15 years. Ji Ungpakorn, a prominent activist and political scientist at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, said police have asked to question him over a book he wrote about Thailand's 2006 military coup. His case is the latest sign of ideological struggle over the role of the monarchy, a subject that was once taboo. There has been a recent spate of complaints and prosecutions for lese majeste—as the charge is called—and increased censorship of Web sites allegedly critical of the institution. Those who have faced lese majeste complaints in the past year include a fledgling Australian novelist, a BBC reporter, a prominent Buddhist intellectual and an activist who refused to stand up during the traditional playing of the Royal Anthem before a movie.

Japan construction crew sets off buried explosive

TOKYO (AP)—A powerful explosion shook a small Japanese town Wednesday morning when a construction crew accidentally set off what may have been an undetonated land mine from World War II. The blast sent chunks of asphalt and concrete flying and shattered windows at a retirement home about 150 feet (30 meters) away. Local residents said it shook buildings in the area. The operator of a power shovel that hit the explosive, 25-year-old Jun Kohagura, was cut in the face by flying glass from the machine's front window, according to a police spokesman who asked to remain anonymous, citing department policy. Police think the explosive, which was buried about three feet (one meter) deep, may have been a World War II-era land mine. The incident occurred around 8:20 a.m. local time in Itoman, on Japan's southernmost island of Okinawa.

China quake parents want answers to ruined schools

BEIJING (AP)—Nine Chinese parents whose children died when their classrooms crumbled in the Sichuan earthquake last year said Wednesday they will keep pursuing the government until they know why their school gave way. Questions about shoddy construction methods have become a flashpoint for government critics after the 7.9-magnitude quake killed nearly 70,000 people in May, including many students crushed to death when their schools fell. The parents arrived in Beijing from Sichuan this week to petition the Communist Party's Central Committee for Discipline Inspection. They said they represented the families of 126 children who died when the Fuxin No. 2 Primary School in Mianzhu city collapsed. "It has already been eight months since the earthquake, but there is still no news on what happened," said Liu Xiaoying, 35, as she waited in line early Wednesday for the committee's petition office to open. "This will allow our children to rest in peace."

World

WORLD BRIEFS

Canada to talk about oil sands with Obama

TORONTO (AP)—Canada's prime minister said Tuesday that energy and the environmental impact of Alberta's massive oil sands operations will be priorities when Barack Obama visits Canada on his first foreign trip as U.S. president. The timing of the trip has not been announced but Prime Minister Stephen Harper told a Calgary radio station he's been in touch with members of Obama's incoming government as the president-elect prepares to officially take office Tuesday. "We want to work together with the United States on environmental and energy issues," Harper said. "To be frank on the oil sands, we've got to do a better job environmentally," Harper said. "At the same time, the development of these things is pretty important, in our judgment, to North American energy security." Obama has criticized America's dependence on Middle East oil and has said he'll get serious about energy independence. Harper said Canada's oil sands projects will help. Industry officials estimate northern Alberta could yield billions of barrels of oil.

Ethiopian military hands over security of Somalia

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP)—Ethiopia handed over security duties Tuesday to a Somali force, raising fears that the Horn of Africa country—already fighting an Islamic insurgency and rampant piracy—could collapse into chaos if extremists with alleged al-Qaida links move to seize power. The Ethiopian pullout after a two-year deployment was widely welcomed by Somalis who had viewed the troops as an occupying force, but the Ethiopians also have provided a measure of stability in a land plagued by extreme poverty and relentless warfare. Few expect the Somali government can ensure security even with the help of the Islamist faction with which it has agreed to share power. The government controls only pockets of the capital, Mogadishu, and Baidoa, where parliament sits—and has tried to rule without a president for weeks. It was unclear when all the thousands of Ethiopians will have departed. They were pulling out in stages and gave no exact dates for security reasons.

British census: A new foothold on the family tree

LONDON (AP)—Britain's National Archives released the 1911 census online on Tuesday, giving historians, genealogists and people interested in their family trees easy access to records containing the details of 27 million people. The release of the data means that amateur historians could discover new information—maybe their grandparents lived next door to Virginia Woolf, listed with her brother on Fitzroy Square in central London—or help nail down the missing piece of a family puzzle. The census also shows football star David Beckham's great-great-great grandfather John Beckham was employed as a scavenger, or junkman, and that one of singer Amy Winehouse's ancestors was a fruit seller. The Web site, http://www.1911census.co.uk , has information on more than 80 percent of the people living in England on April 2, 1911, and also provides an official look at Britain before the outbreak of World War I. The census gives an individual's age, occupation and place of birth. It also lists how many, if any servants, they had.

Israeli forces storm Gaza City neighborhood

AP

Palestinians carry a man into Shifa hospital in Gaza City, wounded during the Israeli army operation in Gaza, Sunday Jan. 4, 2009.

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—Terrified residents ran for cover Tuesday in a densely populated neighborhood of Gaza City as Israeli troops backed by tanks thrust deeper into the city and sought Hamas fighters in alleyways and cellars.

On the diplomatic front, Egyptian mediators pushed Hamas to accept a truce proposal and, in a hopeful sign, Israel sent its lead negotiator to Cairo for "decisive" talks on a cease-fire. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also headed for the region to join diplomatic efforts.

Israeli military officials say that depending on what happens with what they described as "decisive" talks in Cairo, Israel will move closer to a cease-fire or widen its offensive. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing sensitive policy matters.

Asked if Israel's war aims had been achieved, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said: "Most of them, probably not all of them."

Israeli troops now have the coastal city of 400,000 virtually surrounded as part of an offensive launched Dec. 27 to end years of Palestinian rocket attacks on its southern towns.

Palestinian medical officials reported at least 42 deaths from the conflict on Tuesday throughout Gaza.

The army said three soldiers were wounded, including an officer who was searching a northern Gaza house when a bomb exploded. Palestinian hospital officials say more than 940 Palestinians, half of them civilians, have been killed in the fighting. A total of 13 Israelis, 10 of them soldiers, have died.

Palestinian rocket fire has dropped significantly since the offensive was launched. Some 15 rockets and mortar shells were fired toward Israel Tuesday, causing no injuries, the army said.

Fireballs and smoke plumes from Israeli bombing have become a common sight in the territory of 1.4 million people, who are effectively trapped because of blockaded border crossings. Recent fighting has focused on Gaza City, where Israeli soldiers could be increasingly exposed to the treacherous conditions of urban warfare.

The operation in Tel Hawwa neighborhood, one mile (1.5 kilometers) southeast of downtown, matched fast-paced forays into other areas designed to avoid Israeli casualties. Residents said troops entered overnight, reconnoitered the area, and then pulled back to more secure positions.

Gazans seek new places to bury the dead

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—One family buried a slain son over his grandfather. Another bundled up the tiny bodies of three young cousins and lowered them into the grave of a long-dead aunt. A man was laid to rest with his brother.

More than two weeks into the Israeli offensive that has killed more than 940 Palestinians, Gazans are struggling to find places to bury their dead. Cemeteries throughout Gaza City that were closed for new burials have now reopened.

"Gaza is all a graveyard," gravedigger Salman Omar said Tuesday as he shoveled earth in Gaza City's crammed Sheik Radwan cemetery, a cigarette dangling from his lips.

Just six miles wide and 25 miles long, Gaza has always suffered from a shortage of burial space. But Gazans say Israel's shelling and ground offensive have made it impossible for residents to reach Martyrs Cemetery—the only graveyard in the area with space to dig fresh graves.

The offensive is aimed at crushing the militant group Hamas and ending its rocket attacks on southern Israel. But Palestinian medical officials say roughly half the dead are civilians.

Among them are the Samouni cousins, 5-month-old Mohammed, 1-year-old Mutasim and 2-year-old Ahmed, whose family hurriedly dug up the grave of an aunt to lay them to rest last week.

"We buried them quickly," said Iyad Samouni, 26, speaking from al-Awda hospital in Gaza City, where he was being treated for shrapnel wounds. "We were afraid we'd be shelled. My relatives were trying to open other graves to prepare for the other dead, but we didn't get time."

He said the family fled the graveyard after they came under fire from a warplane.

The three boys were killed Jan. 5 in what the family and the United Nations said was an Israeli shelling attack on a house in eastern Gaza where they had evacuated on soldiers' orders to avoid nearby fighting.

Egypt govt pushes Hamas to accept truce

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—Egyptian mediators pushed the militant Palestinian group Hamas to accept a truce proposal for the embattled Gaza Strip in talks Tuesday, while the U.N. secretary-general headed to the region to join diplomatic efforts for a cease-fire.

U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon has backed the Egyptian truce proposal to halt the fighting, now in its third week. Before leaving New York for the Egyptian capital on Tuesday, he urged Israel and Hamas to accept a U.N. cease-fire resolution and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

"To both sides, I say: Just stop, now," Ban told a news conference Monday. "Too many people have died." He said Hamas militants who have been firing rockets into southern Israel "must stop, they must look to the future of the Palestinian people."

The U.N. Security Council on Tuesday unanimously supported Ban's efforts after he briefed the council behind closed doors.

Tuesday's talks between Hamas and Egyptian officials in Cairo were the latest in intensive diplomatic efforts. In Damascus, the Turkish prime minister's top foreign policy adviser, Ahmet Davutoglu, met for the third time in two days with Hamas' exiled political leader, Khaled Mashaal.

But so far, the push has yielded little public progress.

Hamas' deputy leader Moussa Abu Marzouk told Al-Jazeera TV that the Egyptian proposal is not acceptable as it stands. Hamas has "amendments" for it and if "taken into consideration, it will be a framework for moving toward a solution," he said.

Iraqi voting rules raise concern about challenges

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraqi officials acknowledged problems Tuesday in determining how winners will be chosen in regional elections, raising concerns that electoral challenges could tarnish the key Jan. 31 vote.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have pinned their hopes on the balloting to unify the country's fractious ethnic and sectarian groups. But confusion about the results could undermine that goal and provide a new source of tension.

Voters in 14 of the country's 18 provinces will choose members of ruling councils, which wield considerable powers at the regional level. The vote is widely seen as a dress rehearsal for national parliamentary elections expected by the end of the year.

One of the most contentious issues is how to ensure the fair representation of women—with questions arising over how to implement a legally required quota system setting aside seats for them on the councils.

The confusion stems from the election law that sets guidelines for the vote. The measure was enacted in November after months of bitter debate among rival ethnic and religious factions.

Members of the Independent High Electoral Commission, which oversees balloting, said the law was unclear on certain points, including how to allocate seats based on the number of votes received.

Lack of clarity has forced the commission make its own interpretations in establishing the specific guidelines for the vote.

Commission chief Faraj al-Haidari singled out the women's quota system, saying the committee had decided to mandate one female winner for every two men because the law did not take into account smaller parties without female candidates.

Environment

Baby gorilla brings attention to threatened species

By ANNIE GOWEN and DEBBI WILGOREN
(C) 2009, THE WASHINGTON POST

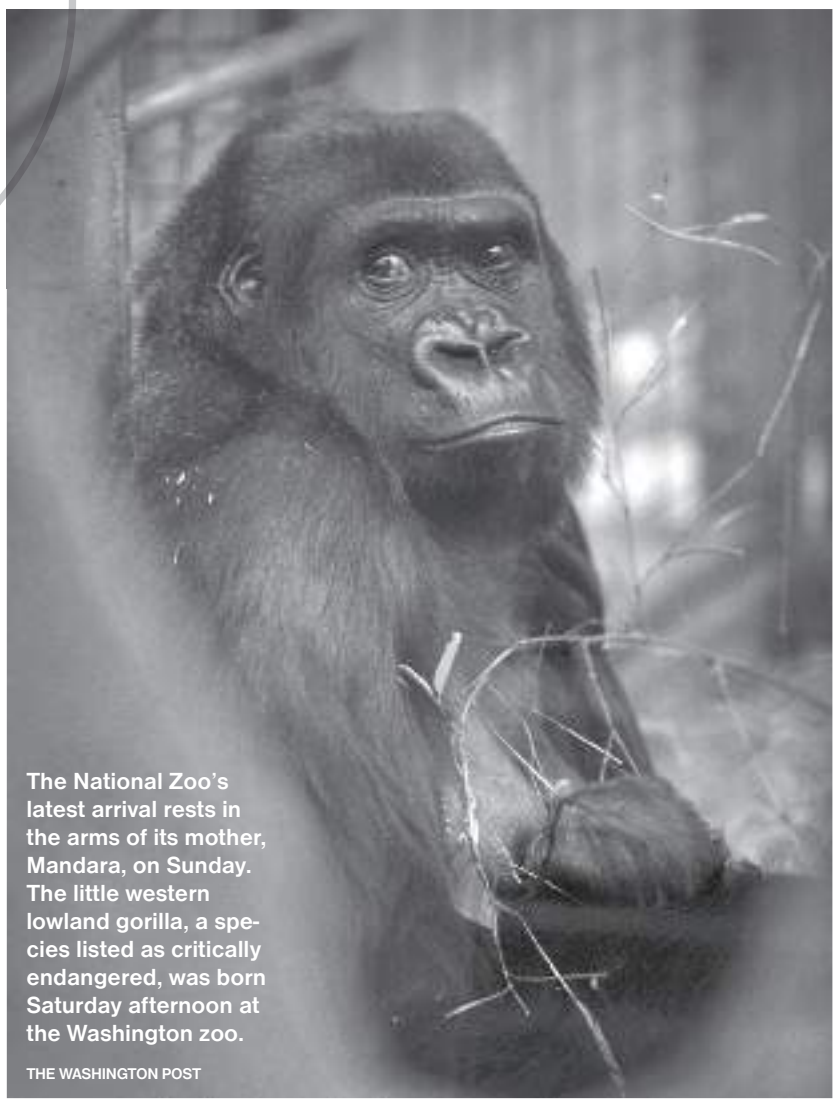
WASHINGTON—A commotion occurred about noon Sunday at the Great Ape House at the National Zoo. A collective buzz arose. A stroller jam ensued. Cameras clicked and whirred. Mandara, one of the female gorillas, had just appeared, cradling the zoo's latest addition.

The 26-year-old Mandara had given birth to an infant, sex and name undetermined, about 1:45 p.m. Saturday, without fanfare or any evident histrionics on the other side of a large plate glass window in full view of staff employees and a few lucky onlookers. It was the first birth at the zoo this year and the first gorilla born there since 2001.

"Awwww," the small crowd murmured as Mandara and the baby settled onto a straw-cozy ledge for a midday feeding. Visitors could see only the baby's wizened head and a hand in the crook of its mother's hairy arm.

"I wonder if she feels the way I do after having a baby," said Elizabeth Sadqi, of Chevy Chase, Md., a teacher and mother of three. "Kind of 'in a zone.'"

Zoo officials said the birth is significant because the animals, western lowland gorillas, are listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources Red List of Threatened Species. Scientists believe that there are more than 150,000 western lowland gorillas in the wild, said Donald Moore, the zoo's associate director of animal care. But the animals, who live in the tropical forests of West and Central Africa, are threatened by poaching, habitat loss and the deadly Ebola virus.



The National Zoo's latest arrival rests in the arms of its mother, Mandara, on Sunday. The little western lowland gorilla, a species listed as critically endangered, was born Saturday afternoon at the Washington zoo.

THE WASHINGTON POST

The zoo's latest arrival came at an auspicious time: The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums has dubbed 2009 the "Year of the Gorilla" to spotlight the animals' struggle.

"This baby gorilla helps our zoo's mission of educating the public on the need for conservation," Moore said. "Having a little animal helps engage and inspire them."

The zoo's staff had planned Mandara's pregnancy as part of the Species Survival Plan, a collaborative effort of North American zoos designed to encourage a healthy gorilla population in captivity. In February, zoo workers stopped giving Mandara her birth control pill, which was hidden in a morning banana. By March, they now believe, she had mated with Baraka, a 16-year-old male in the family group.

Zoo officials said Mandara was an old pro at mothering, having given birth to five healthy offspring, three of whom still live in the Great Ape House. On Saturday, she paced from enclosure to enclosure but otherwise gave little hint that she was in labor. Then, her keepers, who had been expecting the birth for weeks, heard the newborn's high-pitched squeaking.

Mother and child will be closely monitored in coming weeks to make certain the baby remains healthy.

"This is a very critical time for the survival of the infant, and all precautions must be taken to ensure that Mandara and her baby are in an environment that is comfortable, safe and controlled," Moore said.

Staff workers have not gotten close enough to determine the sex of the infant, but they are rooting for a girl (the majority of gorillas born in captivity are males, Moore said).

Families who visited the Great Ape House on Sunday saw sibling rivalry on display, gorilla-style. Mandara's son Kojo, age 7, threw handfuls of straw at his mother as she placidly nursed her newborn. She swatted him away gently.

Max Block, 10, of Washington, had been watching the drama unfold for much of the weekend. He arrived to see the baby Saturday, just a few hours after it was born. He returned Sunday for another look.

"It's pretty amazing," said Max, who raised $2,500 at a lemonade stand this summer for a gorilla preservation group. "She's been holding it, tickling it, stroking it on the head. ... She's a great mom."

Inaugural festivities will be red, white, blue and green

By RICHARD SIMON and JILL ZUCKMAN
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON—For the inauguration of a president who promised to be a friend of the environment, what would you expect but carbon-neutral inaugural balls, hybrid Lexuses, organic menus and valet bicycle parking?

Political correctness will rule the day.

Two Green Inaugural Balls are planned, including one featuring a green carpet made from—what else?—recycled rug. Official invitations to the Jan. 20 inauguration are being printed on recycled paper.

With millions of visitors headed to Washington, D.C., for President-elect Barack Obama's swearing-in, "Our goal is to create an unforgettable evening while treading lightly on the Earth," said Jenna Mack, an organizer of one Green Inaugural Ball—not to be confused with another Green Inaugural Ball featuring Al Gore.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals plans to give away fur coats to the homeless while offering hot soy-milk cocoa in cups that read: "Thank You for Not Wearing Fur!"

"We expect that the only fur on the streets on Jan 20. will be on homeless people," said Bruce Friedrich, PETA vice president.

The group collected furs from people who didn't want them anymore, and the wraps will be marked with black paint before they are given away so that they cannot be sold.

Among other celebrations with cause: The peace ball, billed as "the largest gathering of peace activists without a protest."

The greening of the inauguration is drawing a special effort, because Obama has made green projects a centerpiece of his economic stimulus plan and is expected to highlight the environment in his inaugural address.

"Not only are we committed to holding an inauguration that is the most open and accessible in history," said Linda Douglass, chief spokeswoman for Obama's inaugural committee, "but we are also committed to making sure that it is as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible."

The Environmental Protection Agency has provided a liaison to the Presidential Inaugural Committee to advise on "best practices"—a first, Douglass says.

"We're obviously not going to have paper towels in the bathroom," said Shelley Cohen, helping organize the green ball featuring Gore, the ex-vice president who shared a Nobel Peace Prize for efforts in preventing climate change. "We're going to have air dryers."

"Making the inaugural balls as low-energy and low-carbon as possible won't stop global warming, but it is a very important symbol about the direction of the incoming administration," said Dan Weiss, director of climate strategy for the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank.

To reduce the inauguration's carbon footprint, attendees are being encouraged to carpool or ride public transit, even in evening gowns and tuxedos. If they must drive, they are being encouraged to use a hybrid vehicle or purchase carbon offsets.

Organizers of a number of balls plan to use energy-efficient lighting. But no one yet has figured out a way to hook up to a wind turbine exhibit on display near the U.S. Capitol.

Some of the floats in the inaugural parade are being recycled from past parades, including a 60-foot-long, 24-foot-tall U.S. flag float built for Ronald Reagan's 1985 inauguration.

Not everyone is buying it, though.

"We've had the Christmas season, and it appears we're entering the silly season with efforts by many to look as if they're saving the environment when they're really not doing anything but engaging in feel-good politics," said Brian Darling, of the Heritage Foundation. "In reality, this whole inaugural is going to have a massive carbon footprint."

Still, even if it's a practical matter, as opposed to an environmental statement, some people plan to rent bicycles and Segways to get around town.

"Part of it really is to help people transport themselves because the traditional efforts are going to be overwhelmed," said Stephen Marks, owner of Bike and Roll Washington. "It's just a great way to get around the city. I don't think so much about green."

While inaugural organizers try to promote a new sense of green-being, all receptions and catered events in the House of Representatives will feature compostable or biodegradable containers, plates and utensils, many made from corn resin.

All plastics and Styrofoam are banned. Caterers put food scraps, containers and utensils into a so-called "composting stream" for a facility Maryland, an effort going on for more than a year.

Perry Plumart, deputy director of the Green the Capitol office for the House, says: "It goes from trash to dirt in 90 days."

Winning projects fight climate change by harnessing energy from landfill gas

Seven innovative landfill methane capture projects were recognized by EPA for generating renewable energy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Announced at the 12th Annual Landfill Methane Outreach Program (LMOP) Annual Conference, the seven winners included a project that converts landfill gas to fuel for county vehicles, and one of the largest multiple-customer landfill gas use projects in the country.

"Our award winners demonstrate that through partnerships and innovation we can transform waste into environmental wealth," said Robert J. Meyers, principal deputy assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Air and Radiation. "These projects, and others like them, not only address climate change, but also produce renewable energy and economic benefits for the local community."

Methane, a primary component of landfill gas (LFG), is a greenhouse gas with more than 20 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. Methane emissions from landfills represent an opportunity to capture and use a significant energy resource. Instead of allowing LFG to escape into the air, it can be captured, converted, and used as an energy source.

EPA has assisted in the development of more than 360 LFG energy projects over the past 13 years. Currently, there are approximately 470 LFG energy projects operational in the United States. Electricity projects generate an estimated 11.5 billion kilowatt-hours per year, equivalent to powering 915,000 households. Direct use projects deliver 80 billion cubic feet per year of LFG, equivalent to heating more than 700,000 homes. EPA estimates that 520 additional landfills present attractive opportunities for project development.

The 2008 LFG award winning energy projects employed unique project structures and took creative approaches to use LFG from municipal solid waste landfills, creating a new source of renewable energy to benefit the local community. The winners are:

LMOP Projects of the Year

Granger, Conestoga Landfill Gas Utilization Project, Morgantown, Penn.

Green Energy Center, High Btu Landfill Gas Energy Project, Grove City, Ohio

Greenville Gas Producers, LLC and County of Greenville, Greenville, S.C.

LMOP Industry Partner

Casella Waste Systems, Inc., Angelica, Morrisonville, and Seneca, N.Y.; and Hampden, Maine.

LMOP Energy Partner

Lansing Board of Water and Light, Lansing, Mich.

Mars Snackfood US, Waco, Texas

LMOP Community Partner

Seward County Landfill, Seward County, Kan.

More information on Landfill Methane Outreach Program and awardees: http://www.epa.gov/lmop. ***(EPA)***

Life & Style

For these MVPs, Madonna is in a league of her own

By RANDY LEWIS
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

It's official: Madonna tops the Los Angeles Times' Ultimate Top 10, an annual survey combining sales of concert tickets, albums and digital downloads to measure which acts were most popular with the broadest swath of music lovers.

Madonna on the cover of the magazine *Vanity Fair.* The singer was the No. 1 concert attraction in North America during the year, according to Pollstar.

Madonna was the No. 1 concert attraction in North America during the year, according to Pollstar, the concert-tracking magazine, and she enjoyed album sales to the tune of $12.5 million in addition to downloads of $2.3 million.

This year there's also a total split between Nielsen SoundScan's ranking of the 10 biggest-selling performers of 2008 and Pollstar's Top 10 highest-grossing North American concert tours. The highest any Top 10 SoundScan act finished in Pollstar's 2008 ranking was No. 13, where the Jonas Brothers (No. 7 among album sellers) landed after playing to 1.3 million fans last year.

Concert revenue hit $4.2 billion in 2008, according to Pollstar, a 7 percent rise over the previous year, even though the number of tickets sold was down. An 8.4 percent increase in average ticket prices was behind the rise, figures that are "astounding considering the economic environment in which they were generated," Pollstar Editor Gary Bongiovanni said.

The road is still where artists tend to make the most money. Only three of the Nielsen SoundScan biggest-selling artists of 2008—AC/DC, Coldplay and the Jonas Brothers—make the Ultimate Top 10, even folding in their revenue from digital track sales.

The best example? Taylor Swift sold more albums than any other act last year: 4 million, giving her $52 million in revenue from album sales using $13 as the average price of a CD. But she placed No. 12 in the Ultimate Top 10 calculations because she played only a handful of concerts as a headliner. She spent most of the year as a supporting act on Rascal Flatts' tour.

That leaves the upper reaches of the Ultimate Top 10 to the veterans, and no one outperformed Madonna, whose combined income of $120 million is a drop from last year's winner, the Police, which logged $140.7 million.

MADONNA ($120 million)

The Material Girl took in $105.3 million from touring, in addition to $14.8 million from music sales. It's hard to decide what's more impressive. The average gross at her shows, mostly in stadiums, was $5.5 million, and she drew about 36,000 people per show. Additionally, the average ticket price was $153.88, easily the highest among Pollstar's Top 50 grossing tours. Worldwide, according to Pollstar, she amassed $281.6 million.

CELINE DION ($106.8 million)

Dion posted her highest finish in a decade after ditching her residency at the Colosseum in Las Vegas for an old-fashioned, if high-tech, tour. She grossed $94 million, added $11.4 million in album sales and $1.3 million in digital tracks. Average ticket price: $119.00. Dion finished at No. 8 last year.

KENNY CHESNEY ($95.7 million)

This favorite son of Luttrell, Tenn., again proved the most popular country music act on the road last year, pulling in $72.2 million, and was the only artist to sell more than 1 million tickets in North America. Chesney sold $20.8 million worth of albums and $2.7 million in digital tracks. Average ticket price: $71.24. He's up from No. 4 on last year's list.

EAGLES ($90.7 million)

The group might have taken the long road out of Eden, but it was pretty near paradise on the concert trail with the band's take of $73.4 million. CD sales added $15.6 million and the veteran act notched $1.7 million worth of downloads. Average ticket price: $128.82.

AC/DC ($82 million)

The new "Black Ice" album took the veteran Australian hard rock band back to the top of the charts and also made its concert tour one of the year's hot tickets. The band's tally was almost evenly divided, with $37.5 million coming at the concert box office and $44.5 million from album sales. Like Kid Rock, AC/DC doesn't do digital tracks. Average ticket price: $99.73.

COLDPLAY ($81.6 million)

Although finishing sixth, Coldplay is in the enviable position of balancing its power in concert and at retail. About $40.8 million worth of concert tickets were bolstered with $35 million in CD sales and $6 million worth of 99-cent track downloads. Average ticket price: $79.87.

BON JOVI ($81.4 million)

The New Jersey band posted another good year, with $70.4 million from 45 shows in 31 cities, plus $8.6 million in CD sales and $2.5 million in digital tracks. Average ticket price: $95.39.

Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band ($79 million)

This year, the Boss and the E Streeters pulled in $69.3 million on the road and, without a new album, added $8 million in catalog sales and $1.8 million in digital tracks. Average ticket price: $94.17.

Jonas Brothers ($77.9 million)

The newest act to join the Ultimate Top 10 did almost equally well at the box office as at retail: $41.5 million worth of tickets, $30.4 million in albums and $6 million digitally. An average ticket price of $43.69 made theirs the least expensive ticket among Top 10 finishers.

Rascal Flatts ($77.1 million)

This good-time country trio is becoming a concert juggernaut, with $55.8 million on the road, $18.2 million in album sales and $3.1 million digitally in 2008. Average ticket price: $59.47.

'WALL-E,' 'Man on Wire' top Golden Tomato Awards

NEW YORK (AP)—Critics loved a love-struck robot and a tightrope-walking Frenchman in 2008. The sci-fi romance "WALL-E" and the documentary "Man on Wire" took top honors from the 10th annual Golden Tomato Awards.

The awards honor the best-reviewed films of the year as determined by the Web site Rotten-Tomatoes.com, which compiles reviews from critics to measure the percentage of favorable critiques.

"WALL-E" won the Golden Tomato for wide-release with a "Tomatometer" score of 96 percent. "Man on Wire," a film that recalls Philippe Petit's tightrope feat between the World Trade Center towers in 1974, scored 100 percent and won the Golden Tomato for limited-release films.

"Man on Wire" is only the second film in the first decade of the Golden Tomatoes to earn a perfect score. Pixar's "Toy Story 2" is the other.

"WALL-E" is the fifth Pixar film to rank above all others. "Ratatouille" was the best-reviewed film of 2007, along with the lauded Irish romance "Once." "Toy Story 2," "Finding Nemo" and "The Incredibles" are Pixar's other Golden Tomato winners.

"Pixar has won more Golden Tomatoes than anyone else," said Rotten Tomatoes Editor-in-Chief Matt Atchity. "They're not quite batting a thousand, but they're pretty close. Ever since 'Toy Story 2' came out—which is still one of the highest-rated films of all time on Rotten Tomatoes - they've just had this series of really critically loved films."

The Moldy Tomato—given to the worst-reviewed film of the year—was awarded to the horror film "One Missed Call." That movie had the unfortunate distinction of not finding a single positive review, earning a goose egg on the Tomatometer.

Publicist says Affleck, Garner have named their daughter Seraphina

AP

In this Jan. 15, 2007 file photo, Ben Affleck, left, and Jennifer Garner arrive for the 64th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif.

NEW YORK (AP)—Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck's have named their newborn daughter Seraphina Rose Elizabeth Affleck.

Affleck's spokesman, Shawn Sachs, confirmed the moniker on Tuesday. Garner gave birth to her second daughter last week.

Garner and Affleck, both 36, were married in June 2005. They welcomed daughter Violet in December 2005.

Garner and Affleck co-starred in "Daredevil," and they began dating in 2004.

Baby-name experts: 'Seraphina Affleck' is heavenly

By DERRIK J. LANG
AP ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck apparently looked to the heavens for inspiration for their new daughter's first name (Seraphina) and back down to earth—in the garden, specifically—for part of her middle name (Rose Elizabeth). The couple also went to the garden for 3-year-old daughter Violet Anne's first name.

The Associated Press consulted its panel of baby-name gurus to weigh in on the angelic-sounding moniker.

EXPERT: Jennifer Moss, author of "The One-in-a-Million Baby Name Book" and founder of BabyNames.com.

SPECIALTY: Practicality, looking for influences such as family history and life experiences.

IMPRESSIONS: "Seraphina is a beautiful name—based on the Seraphim, the highest order of angels. I'm not a fan of the double-middle name, but it's nice they continued the 'flower' theme by including the name Rose. The only thing that may be a little cumbersome is saying her first and last name together. In the BabyNames.com introduction test, the parents should say just the first and last name aloud: 'Hello, my name is Seraphina Affleck.'"

GRADE: A-minus

■ ■ ■

EXPERT: Whitney Walker, co-author with Eric Reyes of "The Perfect Baby Name" and ThePerfectBabyName.com consultant.

SPECIALTY: Phonetics and rhythm—how names sound and flow together.

IMPRESSIONS: "When names match phonetically, they are more memorable and pleasing to the ear, and this name matches very nicely: The S in Seraphina is similar to the Z sounds in Rose and Elizabeth, tying them all together, plus the F sound in Seraphina matches the F in Affleck. Ben and Jen did the same thing with Violet, since the V sound is similar to the F sound, which also makes Violet and Seraphina sound good together."

GRADE: B

■ ■ ■

EXPERT: Maryanna Korwitts, author of "Name Power 101" and BabyNamingCentral.com founder.

SPECIALTY: Holistic approach, from sounds and meanings to the impact of names on personality traits.

IMPRESSIONS: "To be sure that the press or outsiders do not determine this little one's nickname, Ben and Jennifer should make clear their choice. Sera is certainly the most natural derivation. This variation on the name could work well and will influence this child to be involved in the arts or acting when she grows up."

GRADE: B

■ ■ ■

COMPOSITE PANEL GRADE: B

■ ■ ■

PREVIOUS PANEL RESULTS:

■ Bronx Mowgli Wentz, son of Ashlee Simpson-Wentz and Pete Wentz: C

■ Knox Leon and Vivienne Marcheline, twins of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt: Knox Leon: C, Vivienne Marcheline: B-plus.

■ Zuma Nesta Rock, son of Gavin Rossdale and Gwen Stefani: C-

Van Bruggen, sculptor and critic, dies at 66

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Coosje van Bruggen, a critic, art historian and sculptor who collaborated with her artist-husband Claes Oldenburg on his giant sculptures of mundane objects, has died. She was 66.

Van Bruggen died Saturday in her Los Angeles home after fighting breast cancer, said Andrea Glimcher, a spokeswoman for PaceWildenstein, which represented van Bruggen.

Van Bruggen gained a reputation as an inquisitive critic with her scholarly books and essays on the works of John Baldessari, Bruce Nauman, Gerhard Richter and other contemporary artists.

She was best known through her work with the Swedish-born, American pop artist Oldenburg.

Their collaborations included a 38-foot-tall replica of an upended flashlight on the campus of the University of Las Vegas and a mammoth bicycle that appears to be half-buried at Parc de la Villette in Paris.

"She provided a formidable balance to what Claes brought creatively," said Paul Schimmel, chief curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. "He was playful. He's a draftsman; he begins with a sensual line. She looked at things with a much more conceptual and systematic approach."

Van Bruggen was born in Groningen, the Netherlands, on June 6, 1942. She got her professional start as a curator at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Enschede.

Her first work with Oldenburg came in 1976, when she helped him install his 41-foot "Trowel I" on the grounds of the Kroller-Muller Museum in Otterlo, the Netherlands. The pair married a year later.

She was credited with using a matter-of-fact-approach to persuade mayors and other city officials to embrace the sometimes controversial public artworks she and her husband sought to install.

"I'm the daughter of a physician," she said in a 2006 interview, "and I always feel that every piece is a diagnosis."

Besides her husband, van Bruggen is survived by her two children from a previous marriage, two grandchildren, two brothers and a sister.

AP

In this Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2002 file photo, the Minneapolis skyline is seen behind "Spoonbridge and Cherry" by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen in the city's Sculpture Garden near the Walker Art Center.

AP

This Feb. 9, 1995 file photo shows artist Claus Oldenburg and his wife, Coosje van Bruggen, standing in front of his giant lipstick sculpture outside the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Evocative and real, 'Notorious' is a B.I.G. winner

By JESSE WASHINGTON
AP NATIONAL WRITER

MOVIE REVIEW

You love to hear the story, again and again: Young boy trapped in poverty, chooses crime over the classroom, rises to infamous heights only to be gunned down at the apex of success.

But the film "Notorious," a biography of the rapper Notorious B.I.G., transcends gangster-flick cliches because of the outsized talents of the artist and the actor who portrays him. B.I.G., aka Biggie Smalls, was an artist of unique skill and charisma—all of which is captured in a pitch-perfect, and at times, even moving performance by the obscure rapper Jamal "Gravy" Woolard.

This story begins in the late 1980s, when a young Christopher Wallace (played by Biggie's real son, Christopher Jr.) is seduced by the easy money being made by crack dealers in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. When his mother (Angela Bassett) discovers what the white stuff under his bed really is, she kicks the teenage hustler out, accelerating his criminal exploits.

Wallace does a quick jail bid and returns home with an assortment of potent new rhymes and a new name: B.I.G. His demo cassette ends up in the hands of a brash record exec named Sean "Puffy" Combs (Derek Luke), and a rap phenomenon is born.

Unlike recent music biopics such as "Ray" or "Walk the Line," whose audiences may have been unfamiliar with some biographical events, most "Notorious" viewers will know exactly what comes next: The classic hits; the illogical beef with Tupac Shakur, birthing the East-West feud; the twin killings of these gifted storytellers. But "Notorious" manages to add something new to Biggie's exhaustively chronicled story.

The interwoven stories of the women in his life give fresh insight into Biggie's music and personality. No matter how bad his behavior, they always gave him one more chance: his mother, Voletta; his baby's mother; the girl who Biggie plucked off the corner and Svengalied into the sex bomb Lil' Kim; and his wife, the singer Faith Evans.

AP
In this image released by Fox Searchlight Pictures, Jamal Woolard is shown in a promotional photo for the film, "Notorious."

With Voletta Wallace as a producer and Combs as executive producer, you might have expected the worst of B.I.G.'s life to be blacked out. But it's all there and it makes the film that much better.

Woolard, who hails from Biggie's old neighborhood, could have coasted on his physical likeness and Brooklyn swagger, but director George Tillman Jr. ("Soul Food," "Barbershop") wrings struggle, charm and triumph from Woolard's expressive face. The film drips with authenticity, from the Coogie sweaters to the actual Fulton Street corner where Biggie sold his dope. And the script, written by Cheo Hodari Coker and Reggie Rock Blythewood, has laughs for days—just like Biggie did.

The only weakness is Bassett, a fine actress who seems out of place and lacks Voletta's Jamaican accent to boot. Luke effectively mimics Puffy's exaggerated mannerisms, but there's not much more to the character than some audacious statements and one hilarious hat. Anthony Mackie as Tupac is never given a chance to show the enormous complexity of the man whose weaknesses doomed both himself and Biggie, and pulled rap into the abyss.

But these are small things in the B.I.G. picture. In the nearly 12 years since his death, Biggie has never been more alive than in "Notorious."

"Notorious," a Fox Searchlight release, is rated R for profane language, graphic sex, drugs and violence. Running time: 120 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Lil Kim not happy with Biggie biopic

NEW YORK (AP)—Lil Kim was a big part of the Notorious B.I.G.'s life, but she's not happy about the way she's portrayed in the new biopic about the late rapper.

The Notorious B.I.G. was Lil Kim's mentor and was also romantically linked to the rapper. Their sometimes rocky relationship is depicted in the new movie "Notorious," but Lil Kim doesn't think it's very accurate.

In a statement, she said: "The film studio and producers involved were more concerned about painting me as a 'character' to create a more interesting story line instead of a person with talent, self-respect and who was able to achieve her own career success through hard work."

She added: "Even though my relationship with Big was at times very difficult and complicated (as with most relationships we have all experienced at one time or another), it was also genuine and built on great admiration and love for each other. Regardless of the many lies in the movie and false portrayal of me to help carry a story line through, I will still continue to carry his legacy through my hard work and music."

But Wallace's mother, Voletta Wallace, dismissed Lil Kim's criticisms of the movie in an interview on Monday.

"This is not a Lil Kim movie," she said. "This is a Christopher Wallace movie. It has nothing to do with Lil Kim. If she's disappointed and upset, that is her problem."

At the film's New York premiere last week, "Notorious" screenwriter Cheo Hodari Coker said he understands why Lil Kim might not like the film, but added: "I think that Naturi (Naughton) did a great job playing Kim. I think people are going to be a lot more sympathetic towards (Lil Kim) after seeing the movie."

AP
In this May 27, 2008 file photo, hip-hop singer Lil Kim attends the premiere of "Sex and the City" in New York.

Wayne Barrow—Biggie's former manager and a producer on the movie—expressed less patience with Kim's attitude.

"Our job as producers ... was to deliver for three individuals. That's his mom and his two children. Everybody else: Stand in line, buy a ticket and enjoy the show."

"Notorious" chronicles the life and untimely death of the Notorious B.I.G., who was shot to death in 1997 and remains one of rap's most important figures. It opens in theaters this Friday.

Victim in Polanski case urges dismissal

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The woman who was raped by fugitive director Roman Polanski three decades ago when she was 13 lashed out at the Los Angeles County district attorney's office on Monday, saying she is being victimized again by prosecutors' focus on lurid details of what happened to her.

Geimer

Samantha Geimer, 45, filed a legal declaration asking that the charge against Polanski be dismissed in the interest of saving her from further trauma as the case is publicized anew.

Now a wife and mother of three children, Geimer said that the insistence by prosecutors and the court that Polanski must appear in person to seek dismissal "is a joke, a cruel joke being played on me."

Geimer said she believes prosecutors are reciting sexually explicit details of the case to distract from their office's own wrongdoing 31 years ago. The alleged wrongdoing was brought to light in the documentary "Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired," which prompted the director's lawyer to file a motion for dismissal.

A hearing is set for Jan. 21 on Polanski's motion for dismissal. But prosecutors have said he must appear in person—an act which would risk his arrest.

"If Polanski cannot stand before the court to make this request, I, as the victim, can and I, as the victim do," she said in the declaration signed at her home in Kilauea, Hawaii.

In a motion filed Jan. 6, Deputy District Attorney David Walgren provided sexually explicit descriptions of the 1977 assault of Geimer during a photo shoot by Polanski. It included extensive testimony from grand jury transcripts at the time which included graphic details of the incident. The details of Polanski's sexual activity with the girl had never before been described in legal documents

Geimer said she was disappointed that the district attorney "has, yet one more time, given great publicity to the lurid details of those events for all to read again."

"True as they may be, the continued publication of those details causes harm to me, my beloved husband, my three children and my mother," she said. "I have become a victim of the actions of the district attorney."

Geimer suggested that her feelings should have been considered and she should have been consulted before the prosecution document was filed.

"My views as a victim, my feelings as a victim, or my desires as a victim were never considered or even inquired into by the district attorney prior to the filing," she said. "It is clear to me that because the district attorney's office has been accused of wrongdoing, it has recited the lurid details of the case to distract attention from the wrongful conduct of the district attorney's office as well as the judge who was then assigned to the case."

The 75-year-old Polanski, living in exile in France, wants to return to the United States. While in exile, he won the 2002 Oscar for directing "The Pianist," a Holocaust drama.

Geimer said that the decision for Polanski to plead guilty to a single count of unlawful sexual intercourse was intended to save her from a trial which would have drawn worldwide attention.

"I have survived, indeed prevailed, against whatever harm Mr. Polanski may have caused me as a child," she said, adding she now believes Polanski fled "because the judicial system did not work."

She said her views have been well known since 1995 when she wrote a letter to then-District Attorney Gil Garcetti suggesting the case be dismissed. She said she raised it again in 1997 when the case was brought to Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler.

Sandi Gibbons, the district attorney's spokeswoman, said the office would have no comment because the declaration is part of pending litigation.

Filing: Polanski does not seek return to US

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Roman Polanski has no plans ever to return to the United States, according to a new legal filing in his campaign to have a long-ago rape case dismissed.

His lawyer says in the document filed Tuesday in Los Angeles that Polanski's court battle has a different motivation.

He says the fugitive director wants to provide a legacy for the justice system by showing that judicial misconduct cannot go unpunished.

The legal brief also argues that Polanski does not need to be present for the court to rule on his motion to dismiss a three-decade-old rape charge.

The 75-year-old, Oscar-winning filmmaker lives in France, where he fled in 1977.

Publicist: Hargitay has partially collapsed lung

NEW YORK (AP)—Mariska Hargitay has a partially collapsed lung, but will appear on all of this season's episodes of "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit," Hargitay's spokesman said Tuesday. Publicist Gary Mantoosh declined to comment further.

A statement issued by Wolf Films, the production company of "Law & Order" creator Dick Wolf, said Hargitay's condition is improving.

"Mariska is feeling better," said Tuesday's statement. "We are looking forward to her quick recovery and return to set."

Hargitay, 44, won an Emmy last year for her role as Detective Olivia Benson on the show.

In this Sept. 16, 2008 file photo, actress Mariska Hargitay attends the New Yorkers For Children annual gala at Cipriani's 42nd Street in New York.
AP

Nicks looking forward to Fleetwood Mac tour

NEW YORK (AP)—It's been five years since their last tour, but Stevie Nicks says chemistry is still strong among the members of Fleetwood Mac. Nicks says they're gelling as they prepare for their "Unleashed" tour.

She says the magic is still there, and they're all excited to get back out on the road.

The group—which these days consists of Nicks, Mick Fleetwood, Lindsey Buckingham and John McVie—announced last month they were going on tour for the first time since 2003. Now they've announced new dates that include Philadelphia, Atlanta, Dallas and Los Angeles.

The tour kicks off March 1 in Pittsburgh.

'Class,' 'Bashir' make Oscars' foreign short list

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The top Cannes Film Festival prize winner and a key Golden Globe honoree are among contenders for the foreign-language prize at the Academy Awards.

French director Laurent Cantet's "The Class" and Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman's "Waltz With Bashir" are on the academy's short list of nine films that have advanced from a field of 65 eligible titles.

"The Class" is the Golden Palm winner at last May's Cannes festival, while "Waltz With Bashir" is the foreign-language recipient at last weekend's Globes.

Rounding out Tuesday's short list are Austria's "Revanche," Canada's "The Necessities of Life," Germany's "The Baader Meinhof Complex," Japan's "Departures," Mexico's "Tear This Heart Out," Sweden's "Everlasting Moments" and Turkey's "3 Monkeys."

Academy committees will narrow the field to five finalists when nominations come out Jan. 22.

In this image released by Sony Pictures Classics, a scene is shown from the animated film, "Waltz With Bashir.
AP

'Prison Break' to wrap after 4 seasons

UNIVERSAL CITY, Calif. (AP)—It's inescapable: Fox TV is bringing "Prison Break" to an end after four seasons.

The network said Tuesday that the drama starring Wentworth Miller and Dominic Purcell will begin airing its final episodes this spring. The series took a break after its December season debut and will conclude with about a half-dozen episodes starting April 17.

It's the right move for "Prison Break" and its fans, said Kevin Reilly, Fox entertainment president.

"We didn't give it the hook," Reilly told a meeting of the Television Critics Association. "The show just played out. I think you get to the point where creatively everyone feels enough stories were told."

Ending the show now allows it to "finish strong," he said.

AP
In this image released by Fox, Wentworth Miller is shown in a scene from the Fox series, "Prison Break."

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Anti-gang worker charged in rapper robbery in LA

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Authorities say a man who was working in a city anti-gang program has been charged in the robbery of a rapper with the group Bone Thugs-N-Harmony. Deputy District Attorney Paul Nunez says 30-year-old Marlo Jones was charged Tuesday with one felony count each of robbery and first-degree burglary. Jones and several other suspects are accused in the choking of rapper Byron McCane—also known as Bizzy Bone—in his hotel room and the theft of his jewelry on Jan. 5. Jones is listed as working for a subcontractor under a Los Angeles gang-intervention program. Authorities say he was immediately terminated from the position. He is being held in lieu of $300,000 bail. His arraignment is pending.

Mandel leaves hospital, plans return to work

TORONTO (AP)—A publicist for Howie Mandel says he's out of the hospital and plans to return to work Wednesday. Mandel was in Toronto taping his new show "Howie Do It!" when he was taken to the hospital for an irregular heartbeat Monday, said Lewis Kay, publicist for the 53-year-old comedian and game show host. Mandel was conscious and breathing when police officers responded to a report of a man with a medical condition at a downtown hotel Monday evening. Family members went with him to St. Michael's Hospital, police said. Mandel, who was born in Toronto, hosts the hour-long NBC game show "Deal or No Deal." His new hidden-camera prank show "Howie Do It!" premiered last week.

Salsa star Blades donates recordings to Harvard

BOSTON (AP)—Salsa superstar and actor Ruben Blades has agreed to give his personal papers as well as rare recordings of rehearsals and concerts to Harvard University. The university's Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library will receive a complete collection of all the 60-year-old musician's LPs, CDs and liner notes. The archive will eventually grow to include material devoted to his political career, with posters from his failed run for the Panamanian presidency in 1994. Harvard librarian Virginia Danielson said the first components of the collection will be available in mid- to late-2009. The seven-time Grammy winner holds a masters degree in international law from Harvard. He recently announced he was leaving his post as Panama's tourism minister to return to recording music.

Mothers of young children need 'time out' to recharge

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DEAR ABBY: I am a physician and mother of a toddler who understands "New Mom in Las Vegas" (Nov. 4), the woman who is concerned because she finds playing with her 8-month-old tedious. While postpartum depression should be ruled out, it is not uncommon for an adult woman to be bored by endless hours of playing with blocks and rattles.

Raising a child is the most rewarding, loving and, yes, sometimes boring job a person can take on. Suggesting that women are good mothers only if they are constantly enthralled with children's activities sets them up for feelings of failure and inadequacy.

Getting out of the house for any activity, such as a walk or a trip to the library or store, helps relieve the tedium. Most experts urge new mothers to take personal time away from their children as a way to maintain their sense of individuality and perspective. If reading or going online recharges "Mom," it should not be considered an unhealthy escape.

A final word: The new dad should help his partner feel appreciated and practice his own parenting skills by giving her a break from child care.

HAPPY MOM IN CHESTER, VT.

DEAR HAPPY MOM: Thank you for mentioning that fathers are an important part of the equation. "New Mom," and others like her, will appreciate your letter of support. Read on:

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: Every mother is different. Some of us were meant to be stay-at-home moms, others need the challenge of a career and the company of other adults. This doesn't make someone a bad mom.

Perhaps "New Mom" should consider returning to her career earlier than she had planned. Although being a working mom is a tough balancing act, it may provide her with what she needs as both a mother and as a woman.

NEW MOM WITH A PLAN

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 75-year-old mom of four boys, all born 18 months apart. I was bored silly playing with babies, but found a way to make it work for me. I would pack up my babies and walk outside in the morning and after nap time. We walked for miles observing nature while I got some much-needed exercise. I had the healthiest babies in town and looked pretty good myself! I can't remember "playing" with my boys, but we all have fond memories of hours at the park, walking in the rain and snack time at the convenience store.

OLD MOM IN TEXAS

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I am the mother of two nearly grown girls. I never felt it was my responsibility to be their playmate. When they were babies and toddlers, they played while I pursued my interests, hobbies and chores. While I sewed, they played with fabric and ribbons. While I cooked, they played at my feet with pots, pans and spoons. While I did yard work, they played in the sandbox.

It's important for our children to see us as individuals who are more than "their" parents. Finding a playgroup is always a good idea. Seeking therapy may be necessary, too. Completely abandoning the person you were before becoming a parent is unhealthy for both parent and child.

MARGIE IN ROCHESTER, N.Y.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I enjoyed caring for my children, but there were times when I thought if I had to drive one more toy car across the carpet making car noises with my mouth, I would literally fling myself out the window. I woke up with the Barney theme song in my head and couldn't stop cutting all food into bite-size pieces. How many games of peek-a-boo can you play before you wonder if the liquor store delivers? No one prepares you for this type of job.

Things will change as her child gets older, and she can benefit from the support of other moms if she finds a playgroup. Please tell her not to feel guilty!

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT (WITHOUT ALCOHOL)

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $12 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

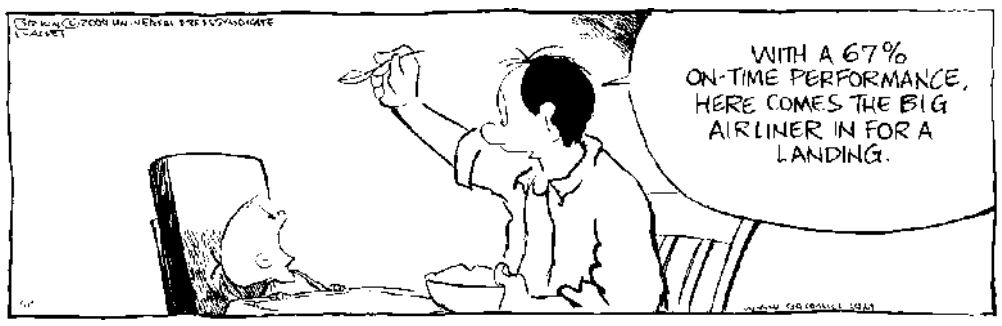
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

BOY, I COULD LIVE HERE...
A TV OVER THERE, AND I'M ALL SET!
GARFIELD, UNLOCK THE DOOR!
IF YOU'RE NOT THE CABLE GUY, GO AWAY!
PIZZA DELIVERY

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HAND ME YOUR TISSUE OF ESQUIRE. I HAVE A HOT DATE.
RUB KRINKLE RUSTLE
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU ACTUALLY BOUGHT A BOTTLE OF COLOGNE?
OVER SIX YEARS

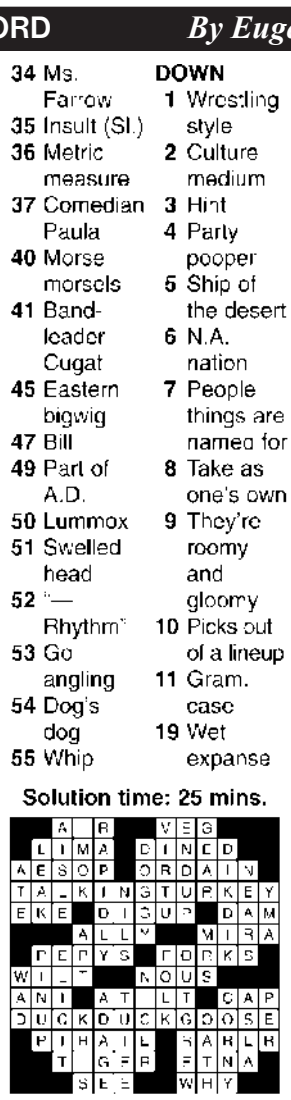
CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

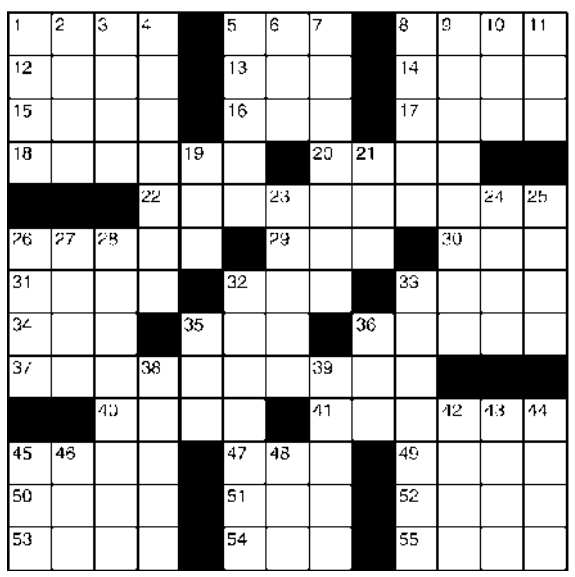
ACROSS
1 Give the axe to
5 Prompt
8 Surrounded by
12 Jamaican citrus
13 Venomous viper
14 Arp's style
15 Handle roughly
16 Long March leader
17 Exile
18 Threatening term
20 Siestas
22 Yogi Bear's home park
26 Winter warmer
29 Type squares
30 Bagel topper
31 Partner in crime
32 More, to Manuel
33 Father (Fr.)
34 Ms. Farrow
35 Insult (Sl.)
36 Metric measure
37 Comedian Paula
40 Morse morsels
41 Bandleader Cugat
45 Eastern bigwig
47 Bill
49 Part of A.D.
50 Lummox
51 Swelled head
52 "— Rhythm"
53 Go angling
54 Dog's dog
55 Whip

DOWN
1 Wrestling style
2 Culture medium
3 Hint
4 Party pooper
5 Ship of the desert
6 N.A. nation
7 People things are named for
8 Take as one's own
9 They're roomy and gloomy
10 Picks out of a lineup
11 Gram. case
19 Wet expanse
21 Foolish sort
23 Minimum
24 Standard
25 Former partners
26 Overly theatrical
27 Hodgepodge
28 Robert Graves subject
32 Faux pas
33 Triumph
35 Banned bug spray
36 "CSI" evidence
38 Bridge player
39 U-shaped yoke holder
42 "Young Frankenstein" role
43 Grandson of Eve
44 "Portnoy's Complaint" author
45 Sprite
46 Miss Piggy's pronoun
48 Palindromic title

Solution time: 25 mins.



Yesterday's answer 1-15



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute; touch-tone/rotary phones. (18 or y.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ernie Reyes Jr., 37; Chad Lowe, 41; Andrea Martin, 62; Margaret O'Brien, 72

Happy Birthday: In this economic time, there are plenty of people looking for a good opportunity and, with your ingenious way of presenting alternatives, you can be at the hub of what's new and exciting. There is money to be made and deals to be finished. Both will be possible if you are swift to make your moves. Your numbers are 1, 5, 16, 20, 31, 34, 46

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Keep emotional matters from escalating by acting fast and you will avoid havoc that can affect your performance. Think about your future before you say what's on your mind or make promises. Someone from your past may be able to help you. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Avoid making the same mistake over again, especially if it has to do with someone from your past who has taken advantage of you before. Don't let temptation mislead you. Love is hot but, if it can cause economic problems, rethink the relationship or your position. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Don't overextend or take on someone else's responsibilities for the wrong reasons. You will be faced with a challenge that will cost you financially. Travel to visit someone who inspires you. You can make a difference by making changes and reforms. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): It's up to you to do what's required if you want to get ahead. No one else is going to cover for you when the economy is in such dire straits. Caring, sharing and meeting halfway will help hold the family together. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Don't fear being a little different. Use your imagination and you will have an edge when it comes to closing a deal and getting what you want. Don't make unreasonable promises. Someone from your past may try to use you. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): You have to be sure that you haven't left anything to chance or to someone else's discretion. Temptation will challenge you to the point that you make poor choices. Don't mix business with pleasure. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Uncertainty may cause you to waffle and second-guess your own ability. Don't leave your job in the hands of someone else. Use your intelligence to get you through troubled times. Utilize your talents and skills. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Do something nice for a cause or for someone in need. You often give too much but this time you will get something back that will lead to the completion of a project you've longed to finish. Love is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Watch your back and you'll stay on top. Someone will want to ruin your day or your plans or even try to steal your glory, if you aren't careful. Don't be too accommodating with friends, relatives and neighbors. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't jeopardize your chances by thinking someone else can do a better job or help you get what you want. You will do fine on your own. Your skills will far exceed that of the competition you face. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Someone from your past will surface—be open and honest as to why you do not want this person in your life. Keep your current partner in the loop to avoid consequences later. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Partnerships will prove to be dicey if you let your emotional side take over and you aren't completely honest about your feelings. A secret about an incident that happened with someone from your past will be revealed. Prepare to accept responsibility. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are aggressive, tenacious, adaptable, creative and unique. You are tough and insightful.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun,* ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7				4				8
	8		5	3		9	1	
	5							
6							2	
	7			8			6	
	9							7
							8	
	2	8		9	3		5	
4			7					1

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/15

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

2	8	9	1	7	4	5	3	6
1	3	5	2	6	9	7	8	4
6	4	7	8	3	5	2	9	1
4	9	8	3	2	1	6	5	7
7	1	6	5	9	8	3	4	2
3	5	2	6	4	7	9	1	8
5	6	4	9	1	2	8	7	3
9	7	3	4	8	6	1	2	5
8	2	1	7	5	3	4	6	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: A... the words listed below appear in the puzzle ... horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and, **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY, DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

HIGH IN THE OZARKS Solution: 9 letters

D	S	W	S	D	N	A	I	H	G	I	H	M	F	S
S	N	I	A	T	N	U	O	M	A	Z	F	A	C	P
N	O	E	G	T	R	N	D	E	T	U	O	R	L	R
H	I	U	B	N	E	E	A	A	E	R	A	I	I	I
A	T	L	A	Y	E	R	A	M	E	X	V	N	P	N
W	C	I	P	C	R	O	F	M	U	L	I	O	S	G
C	E	C	M	O	H	R	U	A	I	R	S	N	E	F
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Attorney for Bank of Guam

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF GUAM, Plaintiff,	)	**CIVIL ACTION NO. 08-0073**
vs.	)	
VALENTINE S. CABRERA, Defendant.	)	**AMENDED SUMMONS**

TO: THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT VALENTINE CABRERA

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO APPEAR by the 21st day after the fourth date of publication of this AMENDED SUMMONS and defend the above entitled action in the CNMI SUPERIOR COURT, at the Office of Clerk of Court, CNMI SUPERIOR COURT, 1st Floor, Guma' Hustisia, Ilmwal Aweewe, House of Justice, Susuper Village, P.O. Box 500307, Saipan MP 96950-0307; and answer the complaint of the plaintiff Bank of Guam, and serve a copy of your answer upon **Robert Tenorio Torres**, attorney for Plaintiff Bank of Guam, at **Plata Drive, Whispering Palms (Chalan Kiya), P.O. Box 503758, Saipan, MP 96950**; and in case of failure to do so, judgement will be rendered against you according to the demand of the COMPLAINT, which has been filed with the Clerk of Court.

So **ORDERED** this 13th day of January 2009.

/s/ Bernadita A. Sablan
Clerk of Court

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Kobe scores 33 to lead Lakers over Rockets

HOUSTON (AP)—Kobe Bryant sank a 3-pointer with 27 seconds left and scored 33 points, and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the undermanned Houston Rockets 105-100 on Tuesday night.

Bryant had 13 points in the fourth quarter, finally getting the better of Houston's Von Wafer, who scored a career-high 23 points in place of the injured Tracy McGrady.

Carl Landry had a season-high 21 points and eight rebounds for the Rockets, who also played without Ron Artest.

McGrady is out at least two weeks to fully recuperate from a sore left knee that's bothered him for months. Artest has missed five of the last six games with a sprained right ankle. An MRI exam also showed a bone bruise that the Rockets say will keep him out 7-10 more days.

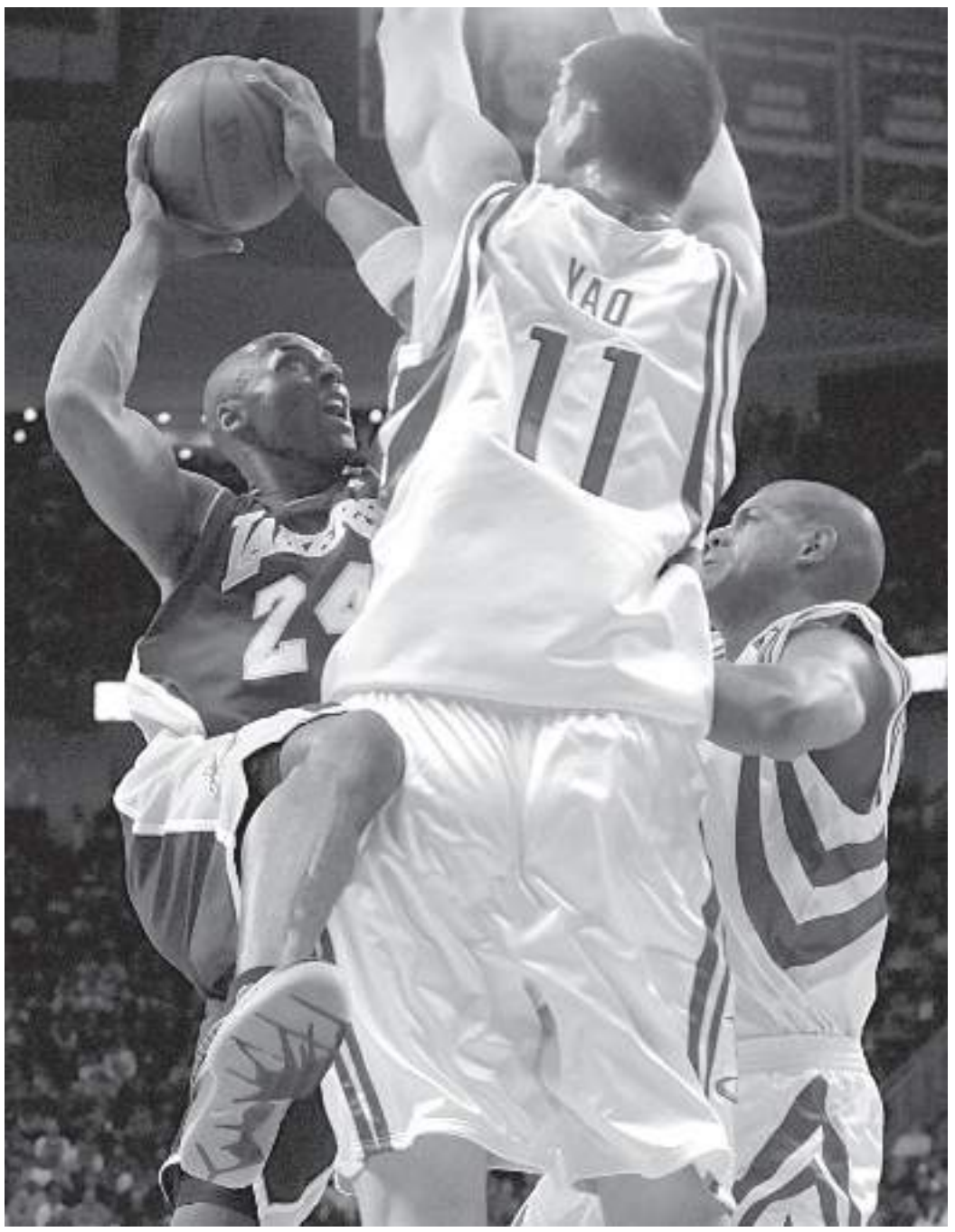
Shane Battier swished a 3-pointer from the corner just before the shot clock ran out to put the Rockets up 100-99. Bryant answered with a deep 3-pointer from the wing on the Lakers' next trip and held his follow-through as the crowd went silent.

Rafer Alston missed a floater, got his own rebound and was fouled, but missed two free throws with 9.6 seconds left. Pau Gasol hit one of two free throws with 7.5 seconds remaining and Yao Ming missed a shot in the lane on the Rockets' last chance to tie.

Trevor Ariza added 14 points for the Lakers, who've won 10 of 11.

Yao had 19 points and 17 rebounds for the Rockets, who lost for just the second time in their last 11 home games.

The Rockets hit nine of their first 13 shots and Wafer's 3-pointer with 5:22 left in the first quarter put Houston up it 20-11. The Lakers answered with a 10-2 spurt and the Rockets led only 26-25 after the first quarter.



AP

Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant (24) tries to shoot over Houston Rockets' Yao Ming (11), of China, and Shane Battier during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2009, in Houston.

Wafer, the Lakers' second-round pick in the 2005 draft, grabbed a loose ball early in the second quarter and beat Bryant down the floor for a dunk. Later, Bryant spun around Wafer and missed a layup. Wafer got the ball and threw a long pass to Brent Barry for an easy layup.

Houston led 38-34 when Dikembe Mutombo made his season debut with 8:01 left in the half. The 42-year-old Mutombo had two baskets and an offensive rebound in just over four minutes of action.

The Rockets shot a season-high 62.5 percent in the first half, but the game was tied at 54. Bryant outscored Wafer only 16-14 in the first half; Bryant was 6-for-17 from the field and Wafer was 6-for-7.

Yao dominated the first nine minutes of the third quarter with 11 points and six rebounds. He earned his fourth foul with 2:53 left in the quarter and earned a rare technical when he kicked a courtside table going to the bench.

Wafer hit a deep jumper and drove the lane for another basket to keep Houston ahead. He swished a jumper from the top of the key in the final minute for an 82-78 Houston lead.

Nuggets 99, Mavericks 97

In Denver, Chauncey Billups made two free throws with 2.2 seconds left to give Denver a narrow win over Dallas.

Billups scored 23 points to lead Denver in recovering after blowing a 17-point lead.

The loss tarnished a 44-point effort by Dirk Nowitzki—including the tying basket with 19 seconds left—as the Mavericks slipped to a third successive loss.

Suns 107, Hawks 102

In Phoenix, the home side notched a third straight win by downing Atlanta.

Shaquille O'Neal had 26 points and 10 rebounds for the Suns, who have won six of seven and improved to nine games over .500 for the first time this season. The Hawks have lost four in a row.

After a tight fourth quarter, O'Neal put the Suns ahead for good, 99-98, with a foul shot with 1:49 remaining.

Cavaliers 102, Grizzlies 87

In Memphis, Tennessee, LeBron James had 30 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his second triple-double of the season, leading Cleveland over Memphis.

James scored only nine points in the opening half, then had 17 in the third quarter and completed his triple-double with a behind-the-back pass for a layup in the fourth.

Magic 139, Kings 107

In Sacramento, California, Orlando made an NBA record 23 3-pointers to cruise past Sacramento.

The Magic made 23 of 37 attempts from beyond the line to break the old mark of 21, set by Toronto in 2005 against Philadelphia. The record provided the only interest to a one-sided encounter.

Dwight Howard had 25 points and 15 rebounds. With the Magic leading comfortably, Howard sat on the bench throughout the fourth quarter as the Magic won their fifth straight game.

Bobcats 80, Pistons 78

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Raymond Felton's jump shot with 0.7 seconds left saw Charlotte edge Detroit.

The Bobcats scored the game's final nine points, including seven from Felton who finished with 23.

Heat 99, Timberwolves 96

In Minneapolis, Shawn Marion hit the go-ahead free throws with 22 seconds left to give Miami a close win over Minnesota.

Dwyane Wade had 31 points and eight assists for Miami, who inflicted the Timberwolves' first loss in 2009 after five straight wins.

Minnesota's Randy Foye had a shot to take the lead after Marion's free throws, but Wade swatted the layup attempt away and Foye's last-gasp 3-point attempt went wide.

On rebound from Smoltz, Braves turn to ex-Red Sox Lowe

ATLANTA(AP)—The Braves bounced right back from the disappointment of losing John Smoltz.

Determined to rebuild a once-proud pitching staff that fell into disarray, Atlanta reached a preliminary agreement Tuesday on a $60 million, four-year contract with Derek Lowe and finalized a deal with Japanese all-star pitcher Kenshin Kawakami.

Just like that, the Braves' rotation—once the most dominant in baseball—suddenly looks a whole lot stronger with spring training just a month away.

"You've got to have pitching," manager Bobby Cox said. "You could have the best hitting team in the history of baseball and you still may not get it done. We will feel confident now that whoever toes the mound on any particular night, we've got a good chance of winning."

The Braves would not comment on the preliminary agreement with Lowe, which was subject to the pitcher passing a physical, according a person familiar with the negotiations. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the contract had not been completed.

General manager Frank Wren did say Lowe would be a welcome addition to a rotation devastated by injuries last year. As an added bonus, Atlanta would be landing a pitcher who also was being sought by the rival New York Mets.

"We wanted get back to being a pitching team," Wren said. "If we can do another couple of moves, we can get back to that point."

Last season, Smoltz, Tim Hudson and Tom Glavine all went down with season-ending surgeries, and the Braves slumped to fourth in the NL East with a 72-90 record - their worst since 1990. Glavine has yet to resume throwing off a mound, while Hudson isn't expected back until August.

The 35-year-old Lowe becomes the new ace of the staff.

He was a 21-game winner for the Red Sox in 2002 and spent the last four seasons with the Los Angeles Dodgers. He went 54-48, never had an ERA higher than 3.88 and averaged more than 200 innings a season. Last year, the right-hander was 14-11 with a 3.24 ERA in 211 innings.

"Derek is a guy we would love to have," Wren said coyly. "We visited with him last week and would love to see that come true."

The Braves had hoped to re-sign Smoltz for a 22nd season in Atlanta, but he took a $5 million, one-year deal from the Red Sox.

"It different, it's hard, but the game goes on," Cox said.

In an interesting twist, Smoltz was introduced in Boston on the same day the Braves wrapped up negotiations with Lowe and held a news conference of their own at Turner Field to announce the three-year contract with Kawakami.

The 33-year-old right-hander becomes the first Japanese-born player in the franchise's history. He held up a picture he drew with the symbol for "soul" in his native language.

"My pitching style is all about putting my soul into my pitches," Kawakami said through a translator. "I hope to show that in America as well."

The 2004 Central League MVP won 112 games in 11 seasons in Japan and was regarded as one of the top free-agent pitchers from Japan available this offseason. He was 9-5 for the Chunichi Dragons last year, though he missed several weeks with a strained back.

The Braves were confident about his health after the 5-foot-10 right-hander passed a physical on Monday, and they spoke with numerous Japanese people in the community to make sure he would feel comfortable in his new home.

"One of the things we found at dinner last night was Kenshin speaks a little more English than we originally thought," Wren said.

Though many Atlanta fans were outraged over the loss of Smoltz, Wren and his staff moved quickly to shore up the beleaguered rotation.

The deals brightened what had been a disappointing offseason. The Braves failed to work out a trade for San Diego ace Jake Peavy and was rebuffed by free agents A.J. Burnett and Rafael Furcal. Injury plagued left-hander Mike Hampton also turned down a chance to return to the team, signing instead with Houston.

Then came the biggest blow of all: the loss of Smoltz, who had spent his entire big league career with the Braves but was coming off major shoulder surgery.

"There's a lot of teams involved, especially when it comes to the free agents," Cox said. "There's always six or seven teams going to be disappointed when they don't land the guy. That's what happened up with Burnett and Furcal."

With Kawakami and Lowe, the Braves have the makings of a solid rotation. They previously acquired Javier Vazquez to join holdover Jair Jurrjens, the team's top starter last season as a rookie with a 13-10 record and 3.68 ERA. Another rookie, Jorge Campillo, was 8-7 with a 3.91 ERA.

Vazquez was acquired from the Chicago White Sox for a package of minor leaguers after going 12-16 with a 4.67 ERA.

Kawakami is not overpowering, but he has good control, an effective cutter and a slow, sweeping curve that reminds the Braves of Roy Oswalt's signature pitch.

"It's not like my fastball is going to blow anybody away," he said, according to his translator. "It's makes it that much more important how I use my slow curve. It's a pitch I need courage to throw because if I make a mistake, they're going to take it out."

Chiefs hire Scott Pioli as new GM

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Scott Pioli, who helped build and lead a dynasty in New England, is now in charge of a Kansas City franchise which hasn't won a playoff game in 14 years.

The 43-year-old Pioli will be introduced on Wednesday as Chiefs general manager, replacing Carl Peterson.

"He will have complete charge of football operations," Ryan Petkoff, a spokesman for Chiefs chairman Clark Hunt, told The Associated Press. "He will report only to Clark."

The fate of coach Herm Edwards and his staff was not immediately known.

Pioli, who became vice president of player personnel for the Patriots in 2002 and spent nine years working with head coach Bill Belichick, also interviewed for the general manager vacancy this month in Cleveland.

He inherits a young team coming off a 2-14 season, but is stepping into a situation that seems ripe for a quick turnaround.

The fan base is loyal, though restive, and the team will be playing next year in a virtually new stadium. Arrowhead, which opened in 1972 and is notorious for being loud and rough on visiting teams, is undergoing a $325 million renovation, which includes new luxury boxes, wider concourses and enhanced amenities in addition to new practice facilities, an enlarged indoor field and a brand new state-of-the-art headquarters building.

In addition, the Chiefs are about $32 million under the salary cap, extra money that will come in handy because KC owns the overall No. 3 pick in the draft. Besides that, there are a number of promising young players who Edwards was counting on as the foundation of his rebuilding project.

Pioli, the son-in-law of Miami Dolphins boss Bill Parcells, has been honored many times for his contributions to the Patriots' three Super Bowl championships. With Pioli working with Belichick, the Patriots used an effective mix-and-match of trades, free agent signings and draft selections to dominate the league. In 2007, six players drafted by Pioli and Belichick made the Pro Bowl.

"We are very excited to welcome Scott to the Chiefs," Hunt said in a statement. "With his proven track record of success, Scott is the finest player personnel executive in the NFL, and we look forward to his leadership in building a championship organization."

Patriots owner Robert Kraft praised Pioli as an "integral part of the many championships the New England Patriots have celebrated this decade."

"Scott is a great evaluator of talent," Kraft said. "He is thorough in his evaluations, extremely organized and has done a tremendous job mining all possible resources to help coach Belichick and his staff field the players needed to win consistently. He has played an important role in building a championship tradition with players that I am proud to call Patriots."

Pioli's NFL career started when Belichick hired him as a pro personnel assistant for the Browns in 1992. Belichick then brought him to New England shortly after he became head coach of the Patriots.

From 2000-08, the Patriots were an NFL-best 102-42 in the regular season and rang up 14 playoff wins.

"To sum up in words everything Scott Pioli has meant to this organization and to me personally would be difficult, if not impossible," said Belichick. "From the day I met him, he has demonstrated a passion for football and respect for the game that is second to none."

A club spokesman confirmed there had been no determination made on Edwards' status. That may have been a point of discussion between Pioli and Hunt when they negotiated their deal. Hunt signed off on the rebuilding project that Edwards launched this year and said in training camp he knew it would be a painful process early on.

And it certainly was. Beset by injury, including season-ending mishaps to the top two quarterbacks, the Chiefs beat only Oakland and Denver and set a number of team records for defensive futility. Their 10 sacks were an NFL-low since the stat was kept beginning in 1981.

Yet, when he announced the resignation on Dec. 15 of president, CEO and general manager Peterson, Hunt said he thought Edwards was the best man for the Chiefs program going forward. But he also said the new general manager would have "significant input" into the final decision.

Edwards' first season in Kansas City was a hit. The Chiefs went 9-7 in 2006 and captured the last wild-card playoff spot. They were routed by Indianapolis, but Edwards was just the fifth man to take two different teams to the postseason in his first year; he also did it in 2001 with the Jets.

He wanted to begin dismantling an aging team and start rebuilding that next season, but ran into opposition from a front office that felt there was enough left for another playoff run. But after an encouraging 4-3 start, age and ineffectiveness at several key positions began creating problems. The Chiefs ended 2007 on a nine-game losing streak. Then Hunt agreed it was time to tear it down and rebuild.

Now Pioli takes charge of those efforts.

In this Feb. 8, 2005, file photo, Scott Pioli, New England Patriots vice president of player personnel, holds the Vince Lombardi trophy during a Super Bowl victory parade in Boston.

AP

Mike Shanahan's Broncos successor has some fixing to do

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—Josh McDaniels went right to work Tuesday figuring out how to fix the dreadful Denver defense that was Mike Shanahan's undoing.

His first order of business: luring former San Francisco 49ers coach Mike Nolan to the cause. Nolan agreed late Tuesday to become the Broncos' fourth defensive coordinator in four years.

Nolan, 49, served as defensive coordinator with the Ravens, Jets, Redskins and Giants before getting his first head coaching job in San Francisco, where he was fired midway through his fourth season last year.

He got his start in the NFL as a special teams and linebackers coach on Dan Reeves' staff in Denver from 1987-92, and team owner Pat Bowlen said Monday he was excited at the prospect of Nolan's return.

Bowlen also would like to see McDaniels keep some of Shanahan's offensive coaches around but he's not going to insist on it.

"I think it would be a mistake for me to say, 'You've got to do this,' because then if it doesn't work out, it's my fault," Bowlen said. "But I think there are some coaches here I'd like to see remain. If the head coach decides he can't do that, then that's going to be his decision."

That sounds like a step toward giving McDaniels a least a sliver of the kind of power Shanahan enjoyed.

"He's the head football coach, that's his job," Bowlen said. "There's no line. I'm going to let him do his job."

On his way out the door, Shanahan suggested the next coach "would have to be crazy" to break up the offensive staff that guided Denver to the No. 2 ranking in the league this year and includes well-renowned assistants Bobby Turner, who has worked with the Broncos running backs for 14 seasons, and wide receivers coach Jedd Fisch.

Jay Cutler publicly criticized Shanahan's firing and begged Bowlen to keep quarterbacks coach Jeremy Bates, who called the plays last year when Cutler set several franchise passing records and earned his first trip to the Pro Bowl.

Even though he has three years left on his contract, Bates' status was thrown into question with the hiring of McDaniels, a fellow 32-year-old offensive whiz kid, as his new boss.

McDaniels is the one calling the shots and the plays around here now.

He said he also wouldn't mind luring Dom Capers over from his job on New England's staff to help repair the Broncos' defense.

As for any holdover assistants from Shanahan's staff, McDaniels said he knows only a couple of them informally but will have "no preconceived notion" on the future of those coaches as he begins assembling his team of advisers.

The Broncos' new coach also began taking a look at the roster Shanahan left behind when he was fired last month after a 14-year run that included two Super Bowls in the 1990s but ended with the team mired in mediocrity.

Although McDaniels is moving from one potent offense to another, one that needs only a bit of tweaking, his toughest task is in repairing a defense that will have its fourth coordinator in four seasons.

That means a new playbook to study, a new scheme to learn, new terminology to memorize.

Now seems like the perfect time for the Broncos, who are built around a 4-3 alignment, to switch to the 3-4 with sprinkles of the 4-3, the same style that McDaniels and Nolan are accustomed to. That would require significant changes in personnel, however, particularly up front.

"Once the coordinator is named we will discuss the personnel that we have here and the direction that we want to go," McDaniels said.

But really, there's nobody they need to build around on defense, no star that dictates what their style should be.

Last season, Denver finished 29th in yards allowed. They couldn't stop the run or pressure the passer, and Champ Bailey questioned their hearts after a 41-7 loss to the Patriots and McDaniels' high-powered offensive scheme at midseason.

It never got much better, and they allowed 52 points in their season finale at San Diego, where a win would have put them into the playoffs and perhaps saved Shanahan's job.

The Broncos managed 13 takeaways in 2008, the second-lowest total in the 30 years since the NFL expanded to a 16-game schedule, and they surrendered a league-worst 448 points. They went through six starting free safeties and a half-dozen linebackers, but Niko Koutouvides, last season's heralded free agent acquisition, wasn't one of them.

Most games, defensive linemen Jarvis Moss and Tim Crowder, members of Shanahan's 2007 draft class, were sideline spectators, unable to push a pedestrian line for playing time.

It was these types of miscalculations in the draft and free agency that led to Denver's downfall—a 24-24 record since reaching the 2005 AFC title game—and, ultimately, to Shanahan's dismissal.

With all these problems on defense, Bowlen gave serious thought to hiring a defensive mind as Shanahan's successor, and he interviewed the Giants' Steve Spagnuolo, Tampa Bay's Raheem Morris and Minnesota's Leslie Frazier before plucking McDaniels from Bill Belichick's staff.

"I looked at that possibility. But the chance to get this young man was very intriguing to me," Bowlen said. "I think he's going to be a great, great coach. I think he can fix our defense."

Friday deadline for Winter Festival of Runs

Interested participants in the 2009 Winter of Festival of Runs have until tomorrow to turn in their registration forms and gain entry to the three races this weekend.

Entrance forms and fees will be accepted until 4:30pm during the race orientation at the American Memorial Park Amphitheater.

Registration fee is $45 for the marathon and $35 for the half-marathon and 10K races. No entries will be accepted on the day of the race, which is this Saturday.

Marianas Visitors Authority and other agencies that volunteered their services for the event are asking for the cooperation of motorists/dog owners during the race day to ensure the safety of the participants.

Races will begin as early as 4:30am with participants in the 42.195-km marathon starting and finishing the event at Micro Beach. Race time for the 21.079-km half marathon and the 10K race is at 5:45am.

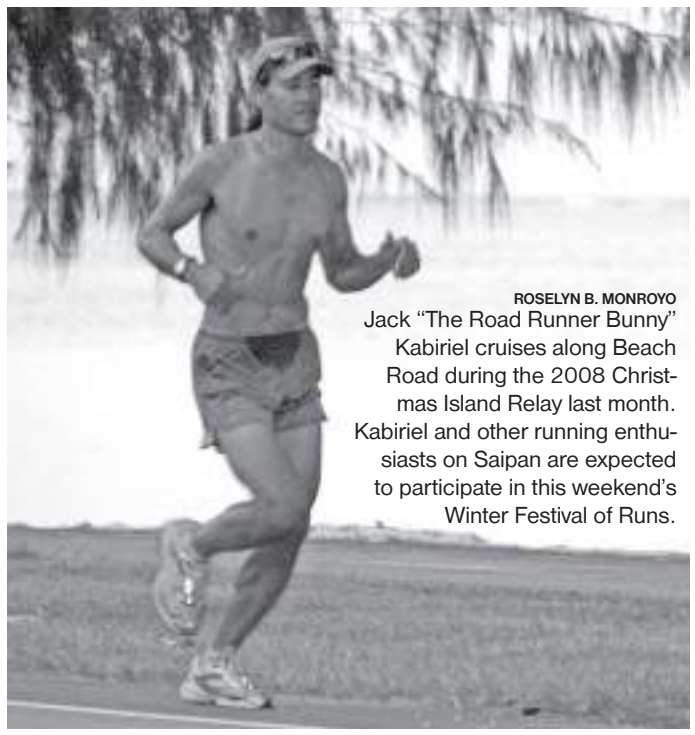
From Micro Beach, runners in the full marathon will head north along Middle Road through the villages of Puerto Rico, Tanapag, and San Roque; turn around in Marpi right before reaching the Far East Broadcasting Company turnoff; and return to connect with the half marathon course.

The half marathon course will begin at Micro Beach south on Beach Road along Saipan's western lagoon going through the villages of Garapan, San Jose, Susupe, Chalan Kanoa, and San Antonio, turning around San Antonio basketball court and returning at Micro Beach. The 10K Fun Run will have the same starting point with runners cruising Beach Road and passing the villages of Garapan and San Jose, making a turn at the Pacific Outlet, and returning to Micro Beach.

Organizers will be using automated, chip-technology timing system from Keisoku-kobo for the three races.

This year's Festival of Runs is being supported by Northwest Airlines, Oakley, MVA, Northern Marianas Athletics, and DFS Galleria Saipan. Other sponsors are Department of Public Safety, Hawaiian Rock, American Memorial Park, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Public Works, and Commonwealth Health Center.

To register or for more information, contact Ed Diaz 1-670-664-3210 or email at ediaz@mymarianas.com. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Jack "The Road Runner Bunny" Kabiriel cruises along Beach Road during the 2008 Christmas Island Relay last month. Kabiriel and other running enthusiasts on Saipan are expected to participate in this weekend's Winter Festival of Runs.

WONG

From Page 28

another level, as far as being a very competitive swimmer is concerned. He can't set CNMI record in Japan because it is a short course meet. CNMI only has long course (50m) records," Kimura said.

The Japan Open will be held in a 25m pool at the Tokyo Tatsumi International Swimming Center in Tatsumi, Koto-ku, Tokyo from Feb. 21 to 22.

There will be 17 events each in the men's and women's competitions.

The freestyle events will be 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m (women's), and 1500m (men's). The backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly events will only have three races (50m, 100m, and 200m), while the individual medley will offer, 100m, 200m, and 400m races.

Cash prizes await winners and swimmers who will make records in the two-day meet.

The top finisher will receive $1,118, $559 for second, and $335 for third.

The world record prize is a whopping $22,375. If a swimmer sets world records more than once in the same event, only one world record prize will be awarded.

Most valuable players in the men's and women's division will also receive a cash prize of $11,187 each.

ONOUE

From Page 28

Also drilling a gross 79 was Yuko, who has a six handicap and settled for second place with a net 73. The younger Togawa had similar scores with Onoue on the front and back nines.

Her mother recorded the lowest gross score of 5-over par 77. But with a three handicap, Noriko dropped to third with her net 74. Noriko started strong with a 1-over par 37 on the front nine and closed out with a 4-over par 40 on the back.

Eun Joo Song matched Noriko's net score of 74, but settled for fourth place after losing in the scorecard playoffs. Song had a 45 and 46 on the front and back nines, respectively, for a gross 91.

Other participants in the group's first tournament of the year were Bennet Seman (net 75), Grace Seo (76), Terry Tudela (78), Terue Ukita (78), Grace Wang (80), Chin Lin Wang (83), Lou Kim (86), Lorraine Babauta (88), Kimiko Abe (84), Doll Yamagishi (80), Aya Matsumoto (77), Eun Ae Chang (83), and Hanna Kyung (79).

For failing to submit scorecards, the last four participants finished tied for 11th place with three others despite having better net scores than the ninth and 10th placers.

Established in March 2007, CWGA is a nonprofit organization founded to promote, encourage, and introduce women to the sport of golf in the CNMI.

CWGA also commits its members to abide by a set of values that will further enrich a golfer's performance, attitude, and conduct-adopted from the USA Junior Golf Association.

KOREAN

From Page 28

pitchers on Saipan.

In the LG Twins website, the team has listed 18 pitchers and four catchers. In the same website, the LG Twins announced they are bringing in around 60 people for the training camp, which will conclude on Feb. 14.

With the LG Twins using the ballfields for a month, Lizama is calling on the cooperation of the public, especially baseball players.

"These guys will be practicing almost everyday and you are going to see those baseballs flying so for people coming to the complex and watching the LG Twins train, be extra cautious," Lizama said.

The LG Twins, managed by Kim Jae-bak, are among the eight teams participating in the 2009 season of the Korean Baseball Organazation.

They are based in Seoul and are formerly known as the MBC Blue Dragons. In 1990, the team changed its name when it was acquired by the LG Group. That same year, the LG Twins won the championship and claimed their second title in 1994.

But the team is now on a 14-year title drought and had its worst finish in the history of the franchise last year placing last with a 46-80 record in the 2008 season.

The LG Twins are hoping to redeem themselves in the 2009 season, which will begin in March. Joining them in the opening of the new season are the No. 1 ranked SK, Doosan, Lotte, Samsung, Hanwha, KIA, and Heroes.

Besides the LG Twins, the CNMI through the Marianas Visitors Authority is hoping to encourage Japanese teams and other Korean squads to conduct training camps here.

To attract baseball teams, the two ballfields will undergo repairs and renovations this year.

The U.S. Insular Affairs Office had approved last year a grant request for the two ballfields with the project estimated to cost $145,000.

EAGLES

From Page 28

in the National Football League. The guys believe in him and the things he does. He's kept it fresh for them. For being almost 100 years old, he's kept it fresh."

Meanwhile, the offensive line (with help from the tight ends and running backs) held the Giants without a sack for the third time this season. That left Donovan McNabb just enough time to make some wonderful third-down conversion passes that had his coach and teammates singing his praises afterward as we've rarely heard during his 10 years as the starting quarterback in Philadelphia.

Yes, even though 22-for-40 for 217 yards and two interceptions with a passer rating of 58 is hardly the stuff of legends, McNabb was the star in many ways. And it was certainly better than Eli Manning, who completed only 15 of 29 passes to go with a pair of interceptions and a 40.7 passer rating.

But McNabb, who was benched in that loss to Baltimore and was the subject of immense ridicule in Philly for at least a couple of weeks, completed the passes he absolutely had to and scrapped the seven-step drop-back passes early because the Giants' pass rush was in his face too often. There are McNabb watchers who follow the team who swear he has never played better than he has these last seven games (6-1, 11 touchdowns, four interceptions).

McNabb doesn't really dispute that, saying afterward, "I've been having a great time during this run." He apologized to his teammates and coaches for picking up a 15-yard penalty for goofing around with a telephone on the Giants' sideline late in the game, saying it resulted from getting caught up in the moment. A lopsided victory over—ready for irony?—Arizona in Philly on Thanksgiving night started the U-turn. The birth of his twins several days later also relieved a ton of anxiety. "It may have affected the way I thought and played," he said.

Suddenly, with McNabb one victory from a second Super Bowl appearance, nobody is talking about where he might be playing the rest of his career. Nobody's wondering if he's a capable leader, the way ex-teammate Terrell Owens did aloud a few years ago. McNabb (and Reid) are going to their fifth NFC championship game in the last eight years, while T.O. has gone to none since he left McNabb's team—and went to just one before he joined McNabb's team.

Asked whether he ever felt worried about McNabb this season, Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie said, "I feel protective of Donovan. He shoulders so much; that position does. He has his family and he has his Eagles family."

Told that at least two Giants players observed that McNabb is a much better quarterback after the benching than before, Lurie said, "I can't say I see that. I really can't say that. But I see him evolving even further as a quarterback and as a leader. He's still young (32). He's in that sweet spot for quarterbacks. I wasn't so specific when I talked to him. I just try to be supportive and tell him I'm proud of him."

Who knows what the Giants will tell themselves now that their season has ended early? What's apparent to those of us who thought they'd continue seamlessly after suspending wide receiver Plaxico Burress is that we were idiots.

Without Burress, 6-feet-5 with an NBA vertical leap, the Giants are one-dimensional offensively. They lost their best receiver in the red zone, their big target on critical third-down plays. Philly's Jim Johnson said afterward, "Plaxico always seemed like he came up with a big play down there."

You can't keep losing your best players and continue to be the champs. The Giants played Sunday without Burress, without the retired Michael Strahan, without pass rusher extraordinaire Osi Umenyiora. Good riddance to Jeremy Shockey; he was ably replaced by Kevin Boss. But the Giants did not have a comparable replacement for Burress, who either keeps you out of some third-and-longs or converts them.

"When he isn't there," Eagles safety Brian Dawkins said, "a huge part of their offense is taken away. You don't have to be as concerned about roaming from one guy to another because you can't play Plaxico one-on-one without expecting him to have a huge game."

Overall, the Giants looked less than mediocre in losing four of their final five games. The Eagles, except for a Dec. 21 loss to the Redskins, have been soaring for weeks.

"I think this team has shown that we're strong mentally and physically," McNabb said. "Everyone believes in one another and given the opportunity we feel like we can take full advantage of it."

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	31	9	.775	_
New Jersey	19	19	.500	11
Philadelphia	17	20	.459	12 1/2
Toronto	16	23	.410	14 1/2
New York	14	22	.389	15

Southeast Division

Orlando	31	8	.795	_
Atlanta	22	15	.595	8
Miami	20	17	.541	10
Charlotte	15	24	.385	16
Washington	7	30	.189	23

Central Division

Cleveland	30	6	.833	_
Detroit	22	14	.611	8
Milwaukee	19	21	.475	13
Chicago	16	22	.421	15
Indiana	13	25	.342	18

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	24	12	.667	_
New Orleans	22	12	.647	1
Houston	24	16	.600	2
Dallas	22	16	.579	3
Memphis	11	27	.289	14

Northwest Division

Denver	26	13	.667	_
Portland	23	14	.622	2
Utah	23	15	.605	2 1/2
Minnesota	11	26	.297	14
Oklahoma City	6	33	.154	20

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	31	6	.838	_
Phoenix	22	13	.629	8
Golden State	11	28	.282	21
Sacramento	9	30	.231	23
L.A. Clippers	8	29	.216	23

Yesterday's Games

Charlotte 80, Detroit 78
Miami 99, Minnesota 96
Cleveland 102, Memphis 87
L.A. Lakers 105, Houston 100
Denver 99, Dallas 97
Phoenix 107, Atlanta 102
Orlando 139, Sacramento 107

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MBI, Dollar Days triumph in Navy Hill caging

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Navy Hill Basketball League kicked off its inaugural season last weekend with MBI and Dollar Days downing separate foes at the Navy Hill Basketball Court.

Dollar Days and Team Yellow dueled in the opening day of the league Friday with the former nailing a 99-86 victory.

Ivan De Vero and Kae Bernardo led Dollar Days' debut win combining for 50 points with the former firing 29 markers and the latter adding 21.

Jeremy Tamayo and Wowie Abuel also finished in double figures chipping in 14 and 11 points, respectively.

Leo Factor paced Team Yellow with his 25 points, while Mike Olaitiman contributed 23. Bernard Montano had 16 and Gil Gapor added 13.

Team Yellow was still in the game in the first half, as Dollar Days led by only seven, 55-48.

But with Bernardo and De Vero hitting their marks, Dollar Days pulled away en route to a 13-point win.

In Saturday's game, MBI eked out a 79-72 victory over Inchcape.

Bing Marasigan drilled 14 of his 18 points in the second half, while three players combined for 18 points in the same period to preserve the lead and the win.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

MBI's Ernie Moises, center, pulls up for a one-handed jumper against Inchcape's Dante Olivos during their game in the 2009 Navy Hill Basketball League Saturday.

MBI had the driver's seat at halftime, 37-32, with William Opone anchoring the team's attack scoring 10 points. He was the lone double figure scorer for MBI in the first half, but his seven teammates also made it into the scoreboard to lead Inchcape by five at the break.

Opone was held to two points in the second half, but Marasigan, along with Dan Mateo, J.R. Barrios, and Ernie Moises, made timely baskets to keep MBI in the lead.

Games in the inaugural Navy Hill caging are played every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. Only one match is played per playing day starting at 4:30pm.

The league was supposed to begin its season last Thursday, but organizers cancelled the opening due to rain.

Friday's Game

Dollar Days 99 – De Vero 29, Bernardo 21, Tamayo 14, Abuel 11, Pangilinan 8, Siriban 6, Galvez 2.

Team Yellow 86 – Factor 25, Olaitiman 23, Montano 16, Gapor 13, Padilla 5, Mercurio 4.

Scoring by halves: 55-48, 99-86.

Saturday's Game

MBI 79 – Marasigan 18, Opone 14, Barrios 11, Mateo 9, Moises 9, Pagarao 7, Bacolod 6, Tagle 3.

Inchcape 72 – Ranola 21, De Dios 12, Olivos 9, Peredo 8, Casabuena 4, Buenabajo 4, Rebuyon 2, McAskel 2, Garcia 2.

Scoring by halves: 37-32, 79-72.

Private school basketball to start 2009 season next week

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The junior varsity division of the 2009 Coalition of Private School Basketball League will start on Jan. 22 with three games to be played simultaneously in various courts.

This year's junior varsity caging will feature the girls and boys team of Saipan International School, Grace Christian Academy, Saipan Community School, Calvary Christian Academy, Seventh Day Adventists, and Mt. Carmel School.

The first half of the season will have the girls teams playing first starting at 3:30pm. Beginning on Feb. 10, the boys games will be played ahead of the girls'.

Both divisions will have a double round-robin format in the regular season with the top two teams automatically gaining semis slots. The last four squads will battle for the two remaining semifinal berths.

The GCA Eagles are the defending champions in the boys division following their 62-54 victory over Mt. Carmel School during last season's title match.

It was a come-from-behind win for the Eagles, who trailed most of the time in the first half.

Lester Vertudez fired 12 of his 22 points in the second half to lead GCA's recovery.

Vertudez was later named MVP of the league and joined teammate Edward Angelo Salas, SIS' Lucas Knecht, Seventh Day Adventist School's Michi Yoshida, Saipan Community School's Justin Poon, and Reynald Cabaltica of the Knights on the All-Conference Team.

This year, the Eagles will have an early rematch against the Knights, as the latter host the defending champions at the MCS court.

In the girls division, Saipan International School foiled a GCA sweep last season after cruising to a 37-23 win against the Lady Eagles.

Zoe Jewell, Amber Roberts, and Serena Patillo teamed up in SIS' title win combining for 23 of the team's total output.

Jewell took the MVP honors in the girls division and was part of the All-Conference Team, which also included GCA's Ricci Pamintuan and SCS' Han Mil Oh.

The Lady Geckos will start their title defense against Saipan Community School at the SIS court in As Lito.

The other game scheduled in the opening day next Thursday will have the CCA Sharks meeting SDA at Calvary's home turf in Chalan Kiya.

Organizers are hoping to finish the regular season games in the last week of February and start the playoffs in March.

The playoffs are scheduled tentatively on March 3, 5, and 6 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

BANMI opens tryouts for Women's Nationals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Basketball Association of Northern Mariana Islands will begin a series of tryouts at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium on Jan. 18 for the CNMI Women's National Team that will be competing in the FIBA Oceania Basketball Tournament this year.

The first tryout will start at 10am with BANMI president Elias Rangamar asking interested participants to come in proper basketball attire.

The trials are open to all female cagers who want to showcase their basketball skills and talents and represent the CNMI in the regional caging.

Saipan will be hosting the Oceania tournament in June.

Besides the CNMI, others FIBA Oceania members likely to compete in this year's caging are Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Guam, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and American Samoa.

FIBA Oceania and BANMI are looking at holding games for the regional meet at the Marianas High School Gymnasium and at the Ada Gymnasium.

The MHS gym will undergo minor repairs for the tournament, while FIBA Oceania is asking BANMI and other members of the local organizing committee to have the Ada gym undergo a major facelift to meet the standard for hosting a high-caliber tournament like the Oceania caging.

Rangamar in previous interviews with *Saipan Tribune* said they are working with both the public and private sectors to solicit support for the major renovations of the Ada Gym.

In March, FIBA Oceania secretary general Steve Smith is expected to visit Saipan anew to check on the venues and get updates from the BANMI regarding preparations for the biggest basketball tournament that the CNMI will be hosting.

Smith was on Saipan late October last year for the initial inspection of the facilities.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Lady Ayuyus player, left, goes for a layup against a Lady Knights defender during the Holiday Hoops early this month at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. BANMI organized the tournament and is calling on all interested female players to join the tryouts for the CNMI Women's National Team.

Freedom Run set for Jan. 19

The 8th grade class of the Saipan Seventh-day Adventist School will hold its 3rd Annual Freedom Run on Martin Luther King Jr. Day this coming Monday, Jan. 19.

The five-kilometer run is a fundraising event for the 8th grade class trip as well as an event to pay tribute to the great civil rights leader.

The 3rd Annual Freedom Run will begin at 5:15pm at the Garapan Fishing Base and end at the Kilili Beach pavilion.

The registration fee is $10 and all finishers will be eligible for prizes at a drawing to be held after the race. Registration for the run will begin at 4:30pm.

Participants may pre-register at the Saipan SDA School or Saipan SDA Dental Clinic. When the race is finished transportation back to the Garapan Fishing Base will be provided for those who need it.

The 8th grade class is raising funds for its annual class trip. In the past, classes have visited Japan, the Philippines, Bali, Australia, Palau, Hawaii, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, and New Zealand.

This year the students hope to visit Japan. The students will spend several weeks learning about the geography, history, and culture of Japan before traveling to the island nation to learn about and experience the Land of the Rising Sun first hand.

Last year, ageless wonder Steven Pixley led a pack of 38 other participants from the starting point followed closely by Mieko Carey, who was the top female finisher.

For more information about 3rd Annual Freedom Run, contact Sean Maycock or Nicole French at the Saipan SDA School, 234-7326 or 285-3127. ***(Mark Rabago)***

MBI, Dollar Days triumph in Navy Hill caging

The Navy Hill Basketball League kicked off its inaugural season last weekend with MBI and Dollar Days downing separate foes at the Navy Hill Basketball Court.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Kobe scores 33 to lead Lakers over Rockets

Kobe Bryant sank a 3-pointer with 27 seconds left and scored 33 points, and the Los Angeles Lakers beat the undermanned Houston Rockets 105-100 on Tuesday night.

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Wong invited to Japan Open 2009

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Tsunami Swimming Center Saipan swimmer Rezne Wong will be pitted against medalists and finalists of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2008 FINA World Championships when he competes in the 50th Japan Swimming Championships.

Wong will be participating in the elite meet dubbed as Japan Open 2009 after receiving an invitation from Japan Swimming Federation.

JSF's Kiho Abe, who chaired the competition committee of the 2008 Junior Pan Pacific Championships in Guam this month, was impressed with Wong's performance in last week's races.

Wong made it to the finals of the 100m breaststroke, timing in at 1:10.72. In the finals, he raced against the U.S. Nicholas D'Innocenzo and Stuart Ferguson, Japan's Akihiro Yamaguchi, China's Jianjia Xue, and Australia's Jeremy Meyer and Bogdan Knezevic.

Rezne Wong will be leaving Saipan next month to compete in the Japan Open 2009.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The Marianas High School students timed in at 1:09.86 in the finals and could have set a new CNMI National mark, but his time was not considered an official record, as he was disqualified in the finals due to an illegal downward dolphin kick.

No CNMI swimmer has yet to break the 1:10.00 barrier in the 100m breaststroke. Wong holds the CNMI National mark in that event at 1:10.21.

Tsunami Saipan coach Hiro Kimura said Wong will have an all-expense paid trip to Japan, courtesy of JSF.

He will be competing in the 50m and 100m breaststroke, 50m butterfly, and 100m individual medley events.

Kimura said he is hoping that Wong's level of competitiveness will move to a higher level after the races in Japan.

"We want him to move to

See WONG on Page 26

Korean pro baseball team holds training on Saipan

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Division of Sports and Recreation director Joe Lizama announced yesterday that the two ballfields at the Oleai Sports Complex will be closed for local tournaments to give way to the spring training camp of a professional baseball team from Korea.

The LG Twins will be conducting their month-long training at the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Pangelinan Ballfield and the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield for the third straight year, according to Lizama.

He added the Twins will begin their training session this Friday and preparations for the camp had started Tuesday.

"They have staff preparing the grounds and batting cages and the Division of Sports and Recreation staff will assist them," Lizama said.

The division said added LG Twins are shouldering all the expenses for the preparations of the two ballfields.

Lizama did not know how many players/coaches/staff from LG Twins are coming in for the training camp, but said the team is bringing in their catchers and

See KOREAN on Page 26

Onoue takes home CWGA January title

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Shiori Onoue started the 2009 season with a victory in the CNMI Women's Golf Association's January tournament last week on the west course of the Laolao Bay Golf Resort.

Onoue shot a net 72 to beat the mother-and-daughter tandem of Noriko and Yuko Togawa, and 14 other participants.

The 7-handicapper Onoue was consistent in her game with a 4-over par 40 on the front nine and a 3-over par 39 on the back for a gross 79.

See ONOUE on Page 26

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants in the CNMI Women's Golf Association's first tournament of the year pose for a group photo after the event at Laolao Bay Golf Resort.

Eagles soar into NFC championship game

By MICHAEL WILBON
(c) 2009, The Washington Post

The Road to the Super Bowl no longer goes through Giants Stadium in the NFC. It no longer leaves the New Jersey Turnpike at Exit 16W. It no longer has Tom Coughlin's winter-red face or the Giants' D or that big rhino of a runner Brandon Jacobs.

Difficult as this is to believe, the road to the Super Bowl in the NFC now officially runs through the desert, out through Phoenix and around Loop 101 to a place that sprung up overnight between the cactus called Glendale, where Sunday afternoon the Arizona Cardinals, of all people, will welcome the Philadelphia Eagles.

Both are party crashers. The Cardinals have never been invited to anything worth attending in their natural lives, 85 or so years in the NFL. The Eagles have plenty of pedigree but were discounted for this season. Their invite to the Big Game never was addressed, not after looking like ragamuffins in mid-November against the Bengals and Ravens.

Nonetheless, the Philadelphia Eagles will be favored to reach the Super Bowl because they took down the defending champs here Sunday. The team that was 5-5-1 and appeared closer to being dismantled than contending for anything came to Giants Stadium and stuffed Eli Manning and the G-Men. In one of those matchups that former Philadelphia quarterback Ron Jaworski likes to characterize as "Manhood Football" the Eagles were the manliest men on the field.

They held the Giants to three field goals and a questionable safety. The highlight of the inartistic, brutal affair had to be the Eagles, on back-to-back series in the fourth quarter, slamming the Giants backwards on critical fourth-down plays that sent freezing New York fans to their cars. Defenders named Brodrick Bunkley, Trent Cole, Stewart Bradley, Brian Dawkins and Chris Gocong were the heroes and their Yoda of a defensive guru, Jim Johnson, put Manning and the Giants in his pocket again.

Andy Reid even jumped out of his monotone when he said, "People say I like to throw the ball around and coach on the offensive side. I know that you win games on defense and mashing the football. I'm partial, but I've got the best defensive coordinator

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